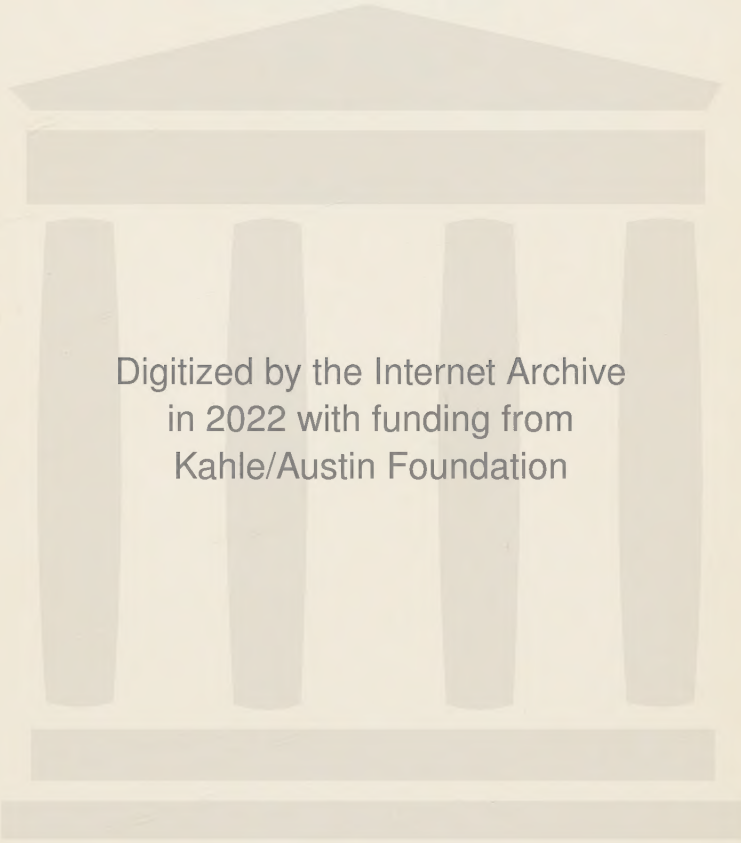




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# **Follow de Drinkin' Gou'd**

## **PUBLICATIONS OF THE TEXAS FOLK-LORE SOCIETY**

**NUMBER VII**

**EDITED BY  
J. FRANK DOBIE**

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## REPORT, SIR

"Corporal Editor, report."

"Some more present and not all accounted for yet, sir."

In mere numbers there is no virtue; but so many people's contributing to this issue of the *Publications* is a sign of exceeding virtue. It is a sign that more and more people are becoming interested in the life that lies spread all about them—"so various, so beautiful, so new."

The freshness of some of this life! It is doubtful if any thing more novel than H. B. Parks' "Follow the Drinking Gourd" has ever been printed in the realm of American folklore, and Mr. R. E. Kennedy might well envy, for *Mellows* or *Black Cameos*, "What is Dis?"—one of the new songs that Virginia Bales has in her article. Being introduced to Mr. Fishback of the Sulphurs by Judge Deaver is as cordial to the constitution as Albert Pike's "The Fine Gentleman of Arkansas." The social significance that folk-lore has is illustrated in B. A. Botkin's able paper. So there is not only fresh and entertaining folk-lore in the world yet, but there is thought and meaning to be wrung out of it. Dr. Law shows how there is real literature being made of it.

For next year the Society is planning a large work. The editor and secretary has been granted a year's leave of absence by the University of Texas—not on salary!—that he may devote his entire time to the preparing of two volumes of Texas legends. The book *Legends of Texas* issued in 1924 is about out of print. The demand for it is unflagging. Material for another volume of legends has accumulated. It is planned to revise somewhat the legends already published and to rearrange them with the unpublished legends. The result will probably be a full volume of stories about lost mines and buried treasure in Texas and another volume of miscellaneous legends in which many flowers, streams, birds, ghosts, and other natural phenomena of the state will be represented. The volumes will be printed by the P. L. Turner Publishing Company of Dallas, and will be illustrated. They will be the result of eight years of collecting. A number of interesting

Texas legends are not yet in hand. They should by all means be included in this final work on Texas legends. Let all good folk-lorists and all good Texans stir themselves to record and send in all possible legends. No matter if the legend has already been told, an additional version may add a detail that will make the composite story more interesting. "Foller de drinkin' gou'd."

I wish to acknowledge indebtedness to my wife, Bertha McKee Dobie, for having aided me in the editorial revision of some of the papers herein printed and for having read page proofs.

University of Texas, Austin,  
June 20, 1928.



## THE PLAY-PARTY IN OKLAHOMA

BY B. A. BOTKIN

The way we play it is no sin,

sing the players in "Going to Boston," mindful of the powers of solemnity that have ever ranged themselves against what John Cotton, in 1625, called "lascivious dancing to wanton ditties, and in amorous gestures and wanton dalliances." So, romping and swinging, choosing, changing, stealing, and chasing partners, even claiming the forbidden kiss, the chanting, laughing players march around the room, as their elders did before them and as youth will continue to do after them, gaily defiant, though innocent enough for all their boisterous bravado.

In somebody's big white house,  
In somebody's garden,  
If you don't let me out,  
I will jump out  
And swing somebody's darling.

### I

The play-party in the United States has grown and decayed through the successive stages of Western migration. Essentially a primitive folk-type, it sprang up in isolated communities in response to a definite need for vigorous recreation—a need not to be satisfied by church socials and literary societies, to be expressed only in rhythmic movement, and as such not to be put down by church restrictions on dancing. With developing civilization and sophistication, bringing changed standards and conditions and new forms of amusement (such as the dance-hall, the pool-room, the automobile, the moving-picture, the phonograph, and the radio), the play-party tended to disappear, save for sporadic revivals. Its tendency has been to flourish in a new settlement only as long as the original conditions prevailed, then to be dispersed once more. Thus the process has been repeated until, like the folk-song and the ballad, the play-party has been relegated to the borders of

society and is to be found only as an antiquated survival in remote and backward places.

Collection and study of the type were first undertaken by William Wells Newell, for New England and the East, in his pioneer work, *Games and Songs of American Children* (1884, 1903), which antedates the standard British collection, Lady Alice B. Gomme's monumental *Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1894, 1898). Chapters for Middle-Western and Southwestern states—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, and Texas—have since been added by old-timers and scholars, including Louise Pound, Dorothy Scarborough, Leah Jackson Wolford, Edwin Ford Piper, Carl Van Doren, and L. W. Payne, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

Now Oklahoma, the last frontier in America, emerges as the latest, if not the last, stronghold of this vanishing phase of American life, and one of the best places to observe the processes of growth and decay. This advantage is derived from the mixed and shifting nature of its population, representing various waves of Western invasion from neighboring states and from the East. Perhaps that explains why a

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<sup>1</sup>The following basic references in the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* are indispensable to the investigator:

Ames, Mrs. L. D., "The Missouri Play-Party," 24 (1911), 295-318.

Gardner, Emelyn E., "Some Play-Party Games in Michigan," 33 (1920), 91-133.

Hamilton, Goldy M., "The Play-Party in Northeast Missouri," 27 (1914), 289-303.

Piper, Edwin Ford, "Some Play-Party Games of the Middle West," 28 (1915), 262-289.

Van Doren, Carl, "Some Play-Party Songs from Eastern Illinois," 32 (1919), 486-496.

Wedgwood, Harriet, "The Play-Party," 25 (1912), 268-273.

The list could be extended to include numerous articles in the *Journal* on ring-games, song-games, and related material. There are only two other important references on the play-party proper outside the *Journal*:

Dudley, R. E., and Payne, L. W., Jr., "Some Texas Play-Party Songs," *Publications of the Folk-Lore Society of Texas*, No. I (1916), 7-34, together with "Finding List for Texas Play-Party Songs," by L. W. Payne, Jr., *ibid.*, 35-38.

Wolford, Leah Jackson, "The Play-Party in Indiana," *Indiana Historical Collections*, 3 (1916).

For a minimum bibliography on origins and backgrounds, one should consult the standard works on American folk-song by Louise Pound, Dorothy Scarborough, and Thomas W. Talley, and on traditional games by Lady Alice B. Gomme, J. O. Halliwell, and G. F. Northall, for Great Britain, and by W. W. Newell, for the United States.

survey made among students of the University of Oklahoma in 1926-1927 yielded, in addition to several hundred square dance calls, some one hundred and fifty play-party songs (about three times as many as have appeared in any one printing), including variants of almost all the songs recovered in other states and many never before published.

The American play-party is unique in the history of folk-song. To be sure, *danser aux chansons* is one of the oldest instincts in man, and dance-songs have existed in all languages. In Germany, for example, during the Middle Ages, we find *Tanzlieder* in use as the only musical accompaniment for the dance, on account of the religious ban on instrumental music.<sup>2</sup> The fact that such songs have not always come down to us is not to be taken as evidence that they did not exist, but is to be attributed simply to the ephemeral nature of rude improvisations, which were not thought worthy of preservation. And yet, though they may be assumed to have existed wherever the right conditions obtained—principally religious prejudice against dancing—there is nothing quite like the play-party to be found elsewhere than in America. The very name is American; and peculiarly American are the form and content of the plays. The peculiar nature of the play-party and the peculiar importance and interest attaching to it arise largely from the influence of the square dance (another typically American development of an Old World stock), an influence so strong that in many cases the play-party song consists of nothing but dance calls affixed to harmless and often meaningless jingles borrowed from traditional games, ballads, nursery rhymes, and folk and popular songs. This anomalous, hybrid, eclectic character of the play-party, which is thus dance, game, and song all in one and yet no one of them in particular, makes a fascinating study for the folk-lorist intent on tracing origins and development through all the changes and corruptions of oral tradition.

But the significance of the play-party extends beyond its mere antiquarian or research interest to the collector and the scholar. Its value to the future social historian is inestimable.

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<sup>2</sup>Franz Magnus Böhme, *Geschichte des Tanzes in Deutschland*, Leipzig, 1886, pp. 229-243.



In spite of the preponderance of rigmarole, repetition, and refrain (which make up the framework of movement songs), play-party songs contain a good deal of authentic and dramatic portrayal of the background and interests of the players, the objects, activities, and characters of frontier life. Their crude medley of realism and nonsense—childish, humorous, and picturesque—is delightfully characteristic of immature America, particularly of the raw, half-grown frontier.

This social value of the play-party accounts partly for its utilization in literature. Indeed, certain poets, novelists, and dramatists have been quick to perceive the atmospheric possibilities of the play-party, along with other folk-song material.<sup>3</sup> Three such writers are to be mentioned in particular: Edwin Ford Piper, who in a verse sketch entitled "The Party," in his volume *Barbed Wire* (1917), has faithfully reproduced the setting and characters of a typical gathering of this sort, quoting stanzas from six plays and naming ten more; Elizabeth Madox Roberts, who, in two scenes of her novel *The Time of Man* (1926), makes colorful and dramatic use of a play-party and a square dance, and who also places the opening of a short story, "On the Mountain-Side" (*The American Mercury*, August, 1927), in a similar setting; and Lynn Riggs, who, in his Oklahoma play, *Big Lake* (1927), introduces a play-party on the stage. Interest in folk-lore has always been attended by exploitation in literature. So it was in the Romantic movement, and so it has been in the new movement in poetry in this country—a movement concurrent with the revival of American folk-song and the birth of the blues. Now it is not too early to predict the vogue of the play-party in the new dialect and local-color literature of our time.

## II

The play-party, it has been seen, arose as a substitute for the square dance wherever the pressure of the church was felt. This prejudice against dancing is an old Puritan inheritance, a relic of the tradition that wiped out "Merry England," added

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<sup>3</sup>Effective use of related song and dance material has been made by Percy Mackaye in *This Fine Pretty World* and by Dorothy Scarborough in *The Wind*.

considerably to the chill of the New England air, and followed in the trail of righteousness blazed by the colonists in their extension of the frontier. As a substitute for the dance, the play-party replaced musical accompaniment with the accompaniment of the voice and replaced dance steps with skipping and marching. Prejudice was further disarmed by the fact that these diversions were known as *plays* and *games*, to which the epithet *swinging* was often prefixed. By going to the games of the school, street, and nursery for material, swinging games acquired an additional immunity against criticism. In reality, however, they were not, properly speaking, singing-games, as might appear, but dance-games, in which the real interest was not in the words, which were unimportant save as an accompaniment and, so, very elastic in form, but in the movements.<sup>4</sup> As such they gradually came more and more under the influence of the dance, appropriating the tunes, the calls, and even the figures of the square dance, until the chief difference between the two lay in the absence of music in the play-party. This difference, however, was sufficient to make up for whatever objectionable features the play-party possessed and to justify its existence as the lesser of two evils. Thus it happened that the play-party was most popular after religious revivals, which generally resulted in a dance ban; and ministers even gave their tacit assent by presence at, though not participation in, parties. In certain communities, on the other hand, fanaticism proceeded to the point where the play-party was outlawed along with the dance; and both were kept alive by stealth or open defiance and, like drinking, were referred to under the breath and in a jesting manner.

A typical expression of this attitude, as found in Headrick, Jackson County, near the North Fork of the Red River, a community with a population of about one hundred and fifty persons, follows:

“... Those who have ‘got religion’ look on them [play-parties] with horror as devices of the devil to lure the young folk into sin and everlasting torment. This attitude tends to lend an element of mystery and adventure to them, and the children

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Edwin Ford Piper, JAF<sup>L</sup>, 28, 287.

of the religious folk dare not let their parents know that they sang 'Old Joe Clark' or that they were at the dance iast Friday night."

Many stories are told of the peculiar and fatal fascination exerted by the play-party and the dance upon those who fear their unholy lure, equaled, it would seem, only by the magnetism of the serpent's gaze.<sup>5</sup> Even to this day it is not unusual for a boy or a girl to "backslide" and remain under the ban until the next revival, when he or she repents and "gives testimony" and is taken back into the fold—only to yield to the devil's lure again at the re-opening of the play-party season. Nor is it hard to understand why some habitual offenders should fall so low as to make a regular practice of this "repeating." In many of these parties, I am told, the ringleaders are the younger married set, who pride themselves on an enlightenment that makes them a little more independent (or at least reckless) of Mrs. Grundy.

In the eyes of many church people the music was—and to some extent still is—the most objectionable feature of dances, fiddlers and fiddles having been looked upon for generations as the devil's own agents. For that reason, I am informed, "many of the girls of the pre-statehood days believed it a sin to dance but not to go to a play-party. Consequently they would do the regulation square dances as long as the accompaniment was sung, but if a fiddle was sounded they would stop immediately."

The waist-swing, surviving in the party games, was another nefarious practice of the dance. As the dance call puts it:

Paw says swing them, Maw says no.

Sis says the waist swing or it don't go.

Another dance call also has reference to this prejudice:

Meet your honey, slap her on the back,

If she don't like biscuits, feed her a flap-jack;

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<sup>5</sup>For an exposition of the square dance, see the excellent article on *The Cowboy Dance*, by John R. Craddock, in the *Publications* of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, No. II (1923), 31-37; also "The Cowboy Dance of the Northwest," by Roy S. Scott, *Publications* of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, No. IV (1925), 53-58.



or:

Meet your lady, pat her on the head,  
If she don't like biscuits, feed her cornbread.

(In other words: If you can't swing her waist, take her by the hand.)<sup>6</sup>

But, though the play-party might dispense with music and the waist swing, it could not do away with the other accompaniments of dancing, which were bound to follow in the wake of parties and put them in bad odor. These were drunkenness, fighting, love-making, and, more rarely, card-playing. This lawlessness has inevitably reacted on the play-party. From Lexington, a central Oklahoma community, some fifteen miles from the University, comes this testimony: "Within the last fifteen years, the 'moonshine' element has had its effect. Social parties have almost become extinct because the uninvited guests of the lower class seemed to grow more numerous and troublesome with every party." Thus participation in parties and dances comes to be regarded as a line of social demarcation, restricted largely to the homes of the lower classes, including the tenants, who, being beyond the pale, feel free to enjoy themselves, untroubled by the scruples of the more conscientious settlers or by any regard for the latter's opinion.

This is a reasonable picture of the decadence of the play-party as, succumbing to the fatal charms of the dance, its mistress, and deserting the game like an unloved wife, it rap-

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<sup>6</sup>A significant commentary on the waist swing in the play-party is to be found in Lynn Riggs's Oklahoma play *Big Lake*, pp. 60-61, where Miss Meredith, the school-teacher, interrupts a play-party in righteous horror and indignation:

Stop it, Bud Bickel! (*She crosses over right, angrily.*) We won't play any more.

BUD (*following her over*)

Whut is it, whut've I done?

MISS MEREDITH

You're swinging the Waist Swing, Bud Bickel!

BUD

Well, o' course.

MISS MEREDITH

It's wrong. It's wicked. I'm ashamed of you. I'm surprised at you. . . . Don't you ever do it again, you hear me? And don't you girls ever let me catch you letting a boy swing you by the waist instead of by the arms. . . .

idly fell from grace, persisting only among the vulgar. But, in any case, the play-party was doomed to die a natural death, to pass with the conditions that created it. Wherever the invading tide of modern amusements found ingress, the play-party was engulfed; and wherever the resistance of the church was weakened, the play-party was assimilated by the dance, from which it sprang. This process of assimilation has been going on in the songs themselves. Even when the words are borrowed from songs and ballads, they are made subservient to the movement and, under the "wearing usage"<sup>7</sup> of the dance, tend to break down into mere fragments, *disiecta membra* of calls. Independent of the influence of the dance, however, the play-party contains in itself the seed of its own decay; namely, monotony and instability of form and subject-matter. In common with most movement-songs, play-party songs lack the advanced sense of structure possessed by ballads and folk-lyrics, without which there cannot be much appeal to the heart or head, and retain the barest rudiments of sentiment, situation, and character—a minimum of meaning and a maximum of movement—tending to degenerate into a mere formula and refrain. As such they would naturally have an appeal to the child mind; in fact, like many traditional games and ballads, which were once the property of grown-ups, they are, in compliance with the law of transmission, which implies descent, passing into the lore of the nursery and the playground. The line may still be drawn, however, between strictly juvenile games, like "Farmer in the Dell," and those in which older players participated.

### III

The picture of the play-party is not complete without some account of the customs connected with it. Play-parties, like square dances, were either "jumped up" on short notice or announced as much as a month ahead, the invitations including the whole countryside for miles around. After the telephone had come in, those who were on the same party line might be informed by a general call, and thence the word was

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<sup>7</sup>Edwin Ford Piper, JAF, 28,265.

passed to neighbors. Otherwise the news was relayed from house to house or carried by messengers on horseback.

To city-dwellers accustomed to downtown amusement centers reached conveniently by cabs and rapid transit systems, the distance traveled by these people to a party or a dance might well seem amazing. Twenty or forty miles were as nothing as a prelude to the evening's entertainment, the trip being made in all kinds of weather, regardless of the condition of the roads or the means of conveyance. Buggies, wagons, saddle-horses, even balky mules (carrying as many as three astride), and later the ubiquitous Ford were pressed into service. Those who could not ride went afoot.

The setting for the party was generally the front-room or yard of the farm or ranch house, though sometimes the school-house or school-yard was used. In at least one case that has come to my notice it was the custom for the young people to occupy the front-room and the older folk the dining-room and kitchen, an arrangement that favored kissing games behind closed doors. In preparation, all the furniture (at times even to the stoves) was removed to another room or out-of-doors, with the exception of the chairs and benches, which were placed around the walls. Often an impromptu bench was made of a long board placed on two chairs and covered with quilts.

The time set was after dark, as soon as the chores could conveniently be done, an unusual activity and alacrity being inspired by the occasion. People began to arrive between seven and eight, with late-comers drifting in until ten. But it was not until the children had been taken into a separate room and put to bed that the fun really began.

Sometimes the party would open with a non-compromising game without a song or dance, like "Snap" or "Spin the Pan," as an ice-breaker, to overcome bashfulness or squeamishness. But soon the swinging games were in full sway, a swinging game being any game with words and tune, which all the players sing (though some, of course, cannot carry a tune) and in time to which they perform a variety of movements, including walking, running, skipping, marching, swinging partners, crossing hands, circling, advancing and retreating in rows, bowing and kneeling, with a few square dance figures thrown



in, particularly the do-si-do, the grand right and left, and the promenade.

To guide the players through the mazes, every party had its leader, as every square dance had its caller. He was qualified for the place by a strong voice, unlimited energy and ability to keep the other players stimulated or amused, an inexhaustible store of songs, and skill in improvising new stanzas to fill gaps in his memory or introduce variety and humor at the expense of individuals. Old-timers, since they knew the games better than most of the youngsters, were often much in demand as leaders and thus took an active part.

Music at play-parties was the exception, if for no other reason than that instruments were scarce; but it might—especially when square dances were to be introduced in the course of the evening—be furnished by a fiddle or a harmonica (the French harp). The musicians were usually old-timers, self-taught, and, like the leaders and callers, picturesque characters—frontier survivals of the old minstrel type—who played with more vigor and endurance than art and who required the inevitable stimulus of chewing-tobacco and an occasional drink.

Refreshments were more common at square dances than at play-parties. They included cakes and pies, roasted apples and roasted shelled corn in the winter, watermelon or ice-cream (often made coöperatively) in the summer. Black coffee, cider, and lemonade might also be served, though strong men, as has been hinted, required stronger drink.

The dress of the guests made a homely, varied pattern, bright gingham and calico dresses, overalls and other work clothes predominating, interspersed with an occasional Sunday best. One old-timer recalls the days when beaux sported fancy neckwear in the form of bandana handkerchiefs or stiff collars and loud ties; when the clicking of cuff-buttons in celluloid cuffs sounded "like a dozen typewriters or the undertone of surf." Then, too, high boots were very much in favor, high-heeled, with straps, costing ten or twelve dollars a pair in contrast to store shoes, which could be had for a dollar or two. The man who tucked his trousers into his boots roughly was a regular guy, while the one who put them in evenly was a dude. To complete the picture, there were the

gestures of the dancers, in which affectation vied with awkwardness, the characteristic attitude of the bashful maiden being arms akimbo and that of the dude being the hand raised high with exaggerated effeminate grace. The more hardened players frequently crossed the line and threw in square dances for variety, just as square dances (which might include Virginia reels and even two-steps and draggy waltzes) often closed with a party game like "Needle's Eye" or "Wink 'em." The gathering broke up after midnight, sometimes lasting into the early hours of the morning, so that the men often got back home just in time to do the chores. During a siege of parties and hoe-downs, one would think nothing of going without a wink of sleep for several nights in a row. But occasionally the tired guest, ashamed to confess his lack of endurance, would break away with some such excuse as, "It's a long drive, and the team will have to take it slow over the south ridge."

#### IV

The play-party has the double interest of folk-lore in America in that it embalms Old World remains at the same time that it projects New World expressions. Thus over two score traditional British singing games, with certain local adaptations, are represented among Oklahoma play-party songs,—harking back to ancient customs and rites connected with marriage, burial, border warfare, tree and water worship, human sacrifice, and the like. In this class "Miller Boy," "Needle's Eye," "Marching 'round the Levee," and "Farmer in the Dell" are the most popular. But the bulk of these songs (and by far the most interesting) are of American origin. These are the true play-party songs, native and colorful, whose very crudity and obvious lack of art reflect the crudity of the frontier conditions out of which they emerged and which made it impossible for them to reach as high a state of development as the games of the English village.

This indigenous product, which includes a few games of American origin given by Newell, like "Come, Philanders," "Little Fight in Mexico," "Marching Down to Old Quebec," and "Pretty Little Pink," may mainly be divided into two

types: the song type and the dance type. The most interesting of the former are those derived from American folk and popular songs, in whose colloquial and vulgar humor the play-party is more at home than in the English folk-songs and nursery rhymes. The sentimental song, radiating American cheer, is well-suited to the play-party's light, maudlin mood; and the rambling nonsense of the comic song is congenial to its gay, facetious, satirical temper. Moreover, these stage and street songs have no plot to hamper the play-party. A situation, a character, a motive that lend themselves to dramatization and movements; a catchy tune or refrain—any or all of these may recommend a song for play-party use. Here we come upon old friends: "John Brown's Body," "Captain Jinks," "We Won't Go Home until Morning," "Old Gray Mare," "Little Brown Jug," and "Wait for the Wagon"; and, among the Negro folk and minstrel songs, "Liza Jane," "'Tain't Gonna Rain No More," "Buffalo Gals," "Old Dan Tucker," "Lucy Long," "Darling Nelly Gray," "Getting Upstairs," "Dem Golden Slippers," and "Shoo Fly." In some cases, the original is preserved fairly intact; in other cases, it undergoes considerable adaptation to suit the needs of the dance; and in still others, only the refrain survives, tacked on to dance directions—illustrating, in various stages, the decay of ballad material under the influence of the dance.

The most interesting of the dance type of songs are those that preserve the progressive pattern of the square dance, which consists of a number of figures, each repeated by successive couples, the directions for changes being loosely knit together by a refrain word, line, or stanza. This pattern is a great favorite, both on account of the loose, elastic structure, which may be shortened or lengthened at will, permitting unlimited freedom of adaptation and improvisation, and on account of the charm of the refrain, as in "Ju Tang Ju."

Circle four in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
 Circle four in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
 Work right and left in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
 Work right and left in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
 Once and a half in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
 Once and a half in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
 On down the line to the next pretty girl a Ju Tang Ju,  
 On down the line to the next pretty girl a Ju Tang Ju.  
 Next young lady to your right a Ju Tang Ju,

Next young lady to your right a Ju Tang Ju,  
On down the line in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
On down the line in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
Meet your partner in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
Meet your partner in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
All night long in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju,  
All night long in Ju Tang a Ju Tang Ju.

Frequently a dramatic device is employed to make the play concrete, as in "Old Brass Wagon," which may be kept up as long as there are parts of the decrepit vehicle left to enumerate in this dramatic history of its break-down.

One wheel off the old brass wagon, (Three times.)  
You're the one, my darling.

Then "two," "three," and "four" wheels off, and finally:

Tongue came out of the old brass wagon, etc.

The axles are off the old brass wagon, etc.

In this class is "Sandy Land," with a similar homely, concrete figure, which is very vivid to the players, many of them the children of sand farmers:

We'll make our living in Sandy Land, (Three times.)  
Ladies, fare-you-well.

Right and left in Sandy Land, etc.

On to the next in Sandy Land, etc.

Lot o' pretty girls in Sandy Land, etc.

Hurry up, boys, in Sandy Land, etc.

Promenade in Sandy Land, etc.

And a variant couplet, rich in local color:

Sift the meal and save the bran,  
Raisin' sweet 'taters in a Sandy Land.

Sometimes the catalogue, growing by accretion, runs to amazing length. Thus, as many as 160 verses of "Skip to My Lou" have been recovered in Oklahoma; 60 of "Coffee Grows on a White Oak Tree"; and 50 of "Old Joe Clark." Shifting of stanzas from one song to another is common. The



couplet and the quatrain are both used, but the most characteristic form seems to be a four-line stanza consisting of a verse sung three times and a refrain. Assonance very often takes the place of rhyme; and the unintelligible or nonsense refrain, used for its sound alone, is popular here as in all folk-song.

The fertility of invention is no less astonishing than the length of these productions. Surprise and novelty abound in the language, which is full of picturesque dialect and racy colloquialism, new combinations and formations, *galimatias*, and plays on words. Images and allusions, drawn from country life, are piled pell-mell on each other, in a breathless hodge-podge, playing variations on a theme or ringing the changes on a rhyme with remarkable ingenuity. Irrelevance and impropriety reign supreme. Vulgar buffoonery mingles with wistful sentiment; satire treads on the heels of compliment; natural history runs into fable; snatches of other songs and ballads, seemingly remembered by chance, are interpolated at random, without regard to unity or coherence. In the same miscellaneous spirit all sorts of material are converted to the uses of the dance. We may well conclude with some examples of play-party songs selected to illustrate the varied sources from which the songs as a group have been derived. The originals have in most cases been lost.

A French and Indian war song survives in "Marching Down to Old Quebec" (which in variants dating from later conflicts becomes "We're Marching to New Orleans" and "We're Marching down to Old Berlin") :

We're marching down to old Quebec,  
Where the drums are loudly beating.  
The American boys are gaining on the day  
And the British are retreating.

The war's all over and we'll turn back  
To the place where we first started.  
We'll open up the ranks and choose a couple in  
To relieve the broken-hearted.

What is apparently a Civil War recruiting song is echoed in "Jersey Boys":

Jersey boys, hear the call,  
An invitation to you all.  
The way is broad, the track is clear,  
Jersey boys, come volunteer,  
Volunteer, volunteer,  
Jersey boys, volunteer.

I am told that Sherman's men sang a song like the first stanza of "Virginia," as the natives fled before them:

Great big white house, nobody living in it,  
Nobody living in it, nobody living in it.  
Great big house, nobody living in it,  
Old Virginia style.

Shake a little bit and bear on the shoulder,  
Bear on the shoulder, bear on the shoulder.  
Shake a little bit and bear on the shoulder,  
Old Virginia style.

"Shoot the Buffalo" is evidently based on a pioneer emigrant song:

Now rise you up, my dearest dear,  
And present to me your hand.  
I'll lead you in the procession  
To a far and distant land.

And the girls will knit and sew,  
And the boys will plow and hoe.  
And we'll rally in the canebrake,  
And we'll shoot the buffalo.

Oh, the buffalo is dead,  
For I shot him in the head.  
Oh, we'll rally in the canebrake,  
And we'll shoot the buffalo.

Break and shoot the buffalo,  
Break and shoot the buffalo.  
Oh, we'll rally in the canebrake,  
And we'll shoot the buffalo.

A well-known sailor's chanty occurs as a stanza of "John Brown Had a Little Indian," which likewise goes back to a counting-out rhyme:

John Brown had a little Indian, (Three times.)  
One little Indian boy.

One little, two little, three little Indians,  
Four little, five little, six little Indians,  
Seven little, eight little, nine little Indians,  
Ten little Indian boys.

Ten little, nine little, eight little Indians,  
Seven little, six little, five little Indians,  
Four little, three little, two little Indians,  
One little Indian boy.

What will we do with the drunken sailor?  
Put him in a boat and he'll sail over,  
Sometimes drunk and sometimes sober,—  
The fall of the year comes in October.

An English nursery tale (printed by Halliwell) turns up considerably Americanized in "Three Old Maids at a Skating Rink":

Three old maids at a skating rink,  
At a skating rink, at a skating rink,  
Three old maids at a skating rink,  
So early in the morning.

The ice was thin, and they fell in,  
And they fell in, and they fell in,  
The ice was thin, and they fell in,  
So early in the morning.

Three old bums come to help them out,  
Come to help them out, come to help them out,  
Three old bums come to help them out,  
So early in the morning.

A Middle-Western drinking song, which has outlived its purpose, is still adapted to play-party use in "Down to Rowser's":

We'll all go down to Rowser's,  
Rowser's, Rowser's,  
We'll all go down to Rowser's,  
To get some Irish stew.

Oh, the duck flew over the ocean,  
The ocean, the ocean,  
Oh, the duck flew over the ocean,  
To see what he could see.

We'll all go down to Rowser's,  
Rowser's, Rowser's,  
We'll all go down to Rowser's,  
To get a bottle of beer.

Right and left to Rowser's,  
Rowser's, Rowser's,  
Right and left to Rowser's,  
To get a glass of beer.

Never mind the old folks,  
The old folks, the old folks,  
Never mind the old folks,  
The young ones, they don't care.

A fragment of a bawdy song is bowdlerized in "Baltimore":

Here we go to Baltimore,  
Two behind and two before.

I've got a girl in Baltimore,  
Street cars run by the door.

And finally a line from a hymn lingers in "Consolation Flowing Free," side by side with a remnant of an old English folk-song, "I'm Seventeen Come Sunday":

Consolation flowing free, (Three times.)  
Come, my love, and go with me.

Come, my love, and go with me, (Three times.)  
We'll go back to Tennessee.

Oh, I'm too young, I cannot go, (Three times.)  
Because I love my mamma so.

You're old enough and plenty of good, (Three times.)  
You could leave her if you would.

Sweet sixteen and twenty-nine, (Three times.)  
I'll be yours if you'll be mine.

Apples fried and apples dried, (Three times.)  
Kiss her on the other side.



Marching song, drinking song; sailor's chanty, emigrant song; nursery rhyme, hymn—all are roughly assimilable to the leveling spirit of the democratic play-party. The crude poetry of a crude people—irreverent, irresponsible, inconsequential, incongruous, but always good-humored and high-spirited—it more than makes up in freshness, vitality, variety, and verve what it lacks in the finer graces of art.

## FOLK-LORE RELATING TO TEXAS BIRDS

BY JOHN K. STRECKER

An interesting and almost unexplored field of research in the study of American folk-lore would be the gathering together of all of the legends, beliefs, superstitions, omens, and weather signs relating to distinctively American birds, particularly those of the state of Texas. Many beliefs regarding birds that are current in the Eastern states are importations brought over by the first English settlers and transmitted to their descendants. The majority of these imported beliefs do not in America even refer to the same kind of bird to which they apply in England but run tangent through the whole gamut of ornithological classification. The lark of European folk-tales, the skylark of Shelley and other poets, is only distantly related to the so-called lark of the United States—the meadowlark—which is an American starling and closely akin to the purple grackle and the yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds. The robin redbreast of Europe, prominent in continental legendary folk-lore, is a small bird only about half the size of the American robin, which latter species many discriminating ornithologists call the migratory thrush. The European robin is not a true thrush at all, but belongs to a sub-family that includes all of the small Old World warblers. The nightingale is a European bird, but the name “Virginia nightingale” having been applied by early settlers of Virginia to the cardinal or crested red-bird, many uninformed persons imagine that the far-famed European songster is also a native of this country.

The following superstitions relating to birds that inhabit Texas comprise but a small fragment of the material still possible to gather. Evidence in the form of travelers’ tales from many lands indicates that representatives of certain avian families are “taboo” the world over, and that outside of these few families there are not many species with dubious histories and reputations. The study of comparative folk-lore might well convince the most stubborn doubter of the close kinship of the entire human race.

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Crows, jays, magpies, ravens, and probably other birds of the great family *Corvidae*, some members of which are found in all parts of the earth; the fluffy-feathered nocturnal owls, also widely distributed; and the great family of nightjars, or goatsuckers, are the three great feathered assemblages popularly considered as birds of ill-omen, devil-birds, or harbingers of death, no matter what country they inhabit. Indians of North and South America, Australians, Asiatics, Africans, and even many Europeans have beliefs and superstitions often strikingly akin to one another about these interesting creatures. As for the crow tribe, the thieving and mischievous, in many cases almost devilish, actions of the birds, as well as their harsh cries and deep and sombre colors, are responsible for many of these superstitions. The two other families comprise an enormous number of night birds, which are often heard but seldom seen. Many persons who can repeat the cries of the American nightjars have never identified one of the birds. There is something eerie about a cry in the night, whether it is uttered by a bird or some other animal, or even by man.

Nightjars, or goatsuckers, are members of three closely related families of more or less nocturnal birds that inhabit Europe, Asia, Africa, and North and South America. The common nightjar is an inhabitant of Europe, including the British Isles. Throughout its range it bears a bad reputation on account of an ancient folk belief that it surreptitiously relieves goats of their milk. In Latin this bird is known as *caprimulgus*, in German *ziegenmelker*, in Italian *succhiacápre*, in Spanish *chotacabras*, and in French *tettechèvre*, all these words having practically the same meaning. It is therefore rather remarkable that the early European settlers of North America, who were very deficient in everyday ornithology, did not confuse the related whip-poor-will with the nightjar and accuse it of sucking goats. (In the United States, the principal animal that steals milk from the udders of cows is said to be a snake!)

All of the nightjars, whip-poor-wills, nighthawks, and "more porks" are birds of ill-omen, no matter what country they inhabit. As a striking example of the influence of folklore on modern technical ornithology can be cited the fact

that the English family name of the nightjars and whip-poor-wills is usually written "goatsucker," not that naturalists do not know any better but that they are unable to provide a suitable substitute that would be half as widely recognized. In Texas, there are at least seven distinct species of birds belonging to the family *Caprimulgidae*. One of these, the paraque (pronounced *pā-rōke*), is confined to the region from Refugio and Bee counties south to Brownsville and the Rio Grande. It receives its name from its weird cry, which, like the cries of other "goatsuckers," is better known than the bird itself. The ignorant Mexicans of the lower Rio Grande country consider this species a foreteller of misfortune. Farther to the south, in Central and South America, where other varieties of paraques are found, the birds are believed by the Indians to be sent by their dead kinsmen and friends to condole with them and give them comfort. "Therefore the Tupinambás of Brazil will not hurt or suffer any one else to injure them."<sup>1</sup> However, the Tupinambás seem to have more respect for birds of this family than do most other aboriginal peoples, for many aborigines think that nocturnal fliers bring misfortune rather than comfort. Many of the New World superstitions regarding nightjars are to the effect that they foretell death. Such beliefs are, or were, common to the Indians of North America (especially to the tribes of the southeastern states, where the birds were very common), to many of the tribes of Colombia, Venezuela and the Amazon country of Brazil, and to the negroes of the southern United States.

The whip-poor-will of the eastern United States occurs in Texas principally as a bird of passage, but a few no doubt breed in the extreme northeastern corner of the state. The bird usually called whip-poor-will in central Texas is the larger chuck-will's-widow, which has quite a different cry. The following superstitions concerning the whip-poor-will are not only believed by negroes in all of the old Southern states but are, as I have found them, current in Texas east of the Trinity River.

In case the cry of one of these birds (either whip-poor-will or chuck-will's-widow) is heard near a house in which lies a

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<sup>1</sup>Southey, R., *History of Brazil*.



sick person, it foretells death. The cry of a whip-poor-will heard once in the night is a death sign, but if the bird cries out repeatedly, the hearer will live a long time. If a chuck-will's-widow is heard near a negro's hut, it means misfortune to the occupant. It is unlucky for one to disturb a chuck-will's-widow in the woods, even in the daytime. Disaster will come to any person who destroys a whip-poor-will's nest. While many modern negroes are getting away from the superstitious fears of their ancestors, old patriarchs still shudder when they hear the cries of these nightbirds.

The poor-will, a rather uncommon cousin of the whip-poor-will, is found in middle and southwestern Texas, far from districts inhabited by negroes. Mexican sheep-herders, so I have been told by ranchmen, will not destroy the nest of this bird for fear that some misfortune will follow the act. A true whip-poor-will is found in the mountains west of the Pecos River, but the bird is so rare as not to be generally known even where it exists.

Two species of nighthawks, one of which is divided by extremely technical ornithologists into several geographical races inhabiting different sections of the state, occur in Texas. Nighthawks fly earlier in the evening than do the more strictly nocturnal whip-poor-wills, chuck-will's-widows, and paraques. They are usually called "bull-bats" on account of the peculiar noise they make when they descend on the wing from a great altitude, the sound being produced by the passage of air through the stiff bristles that border their capacious mouths. Old-time negroes, who were often confused in their zoölogical classification, believed these birds to be bats of unusual size. However, in more recent years, the bat classification has been revised by these people and we now have "leather-winged" bats and "bull-bats," or "feather-winged" bats. All night-hawks are supposed to be uncanny.

Every land in every clime has a "rain bird." In many countries the rain bird is some species of the cuckoo family. Throughout the greater part of the United States, the yellow-billed cuckoo is the "rain crow," this being the title applied to it by thousands of persons who know nothing about its family affinities or specific name. It is a very common bird in Texas and by both whites and blacks its melancholy notes

are supposed to be uttered only before falling weather. Another member of the cuckoo tribe, the eccentric roadrunner or chaparral cock (the *paisano* of the Mexicans), is supposed to kill snakes by hedging them in by a surrounding wall of cactus branches. However, as the roadrunner dispatches serpents in another way (by repeated blows of its sharp beak) and as snakes can crawl over cactus spines with perfect impunity, the story probably started in the bizarre imagination of some South Texas Mexican.

The ivory-billed woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*), the largest and most magnificent North American representative of its family, was at one time an inhabitant of the timber lands of East Texas but is now almost, or quite, extinct. It was a bird absolutely untamable, and its spirit was so much admired by the southern Indians that its dried head and neck were frequently worn by them as amulets in order that the wearers might be infused with great courage. Remaining representatives of a small band of Alabama Indians who a few years ago were living in San Jacinto County, Texas, not far from Shepherd, are responsible for this information, which shows conclusively that the ivory-bill, wherever it occurred, was respected by the aboriginal inhabitants of the South.

The slightly smaller pileated woodpecker, another magnificent species now becoming scarce, is known in East Texas as the "logcock" and is supposed to be "King of the Woodpeckers." I have frequently been told by old negroes that a small woodpecker would never alight on a tree occupied by a nest of this species or on a dead tree on which the big fellow was at work. My personal observations, however, do not confirm these beliefs. The red-headed woodpecker and the zebra bird, or red-bellied woodpecker, are two common species whose conspicuous appearance and eccentricities have caused them to be popular in negro folk tales of the bedtime variety. When the former species goes through its mating maneuvers, it is supposed by some black people to be displaying restlessness because of an approaching storm.

The common expression "A little bird told me," which one hears frequently in Texas (and in almost every other state of the American union), can probably be traced to the old

Biloxi Indian belief that the ruby-throated hummingbird carried verbal messages to human beings. However, different legends dealing with different "little birds" are current among other peoples. Birds are frequently the vehicles for carrying messages; and whenever a bird that rarely sings is heard, its notes are naturally taken to signify something of importance, a change of weather or even impending disaster. It is therefore unlucky to hear a blue jay sing. Those who have never heard this beautiful, saucy member of the crow family utter anything but its usual shrill, rowdy-like notes might imagine that its vocal powers were thus limited. On two occasions I have heard jays sing. In each instance it was in mating time and it was undoubtedly the male who was serenading his future spouse. One pair was perched on the roof of a work-shop, the other on the limb of a large tree. In each instance the male bird pointed its bill upward and gave utterance to low, rather pleasing notes very different from its usual ribald cries. As an ornithologist, I considered both of these instances anything but unlucky for me, for I had been able to confirm something which I had always considered doubtful or even mythical.

According to the old negro belief, the blue jay, who, like other members of his family, is a familiar of evil spirits, is never seen on Friday, for he is then carrying sticks for fuel to the devil in hell. One theory, however, is that the infernal fires are fed by sand; therefore, some negroes, and even some whites, hold that the jay takes sand rather than sticks to hell. I have heard of negroes and whites who would quit working at a place near which jays had set up a chatter in order to get out of hearing of the sinister birds. Hunters frequently call jays "devil birds," because their cries arouse the game being hunted. Members of one of the Canadian tribes of Indians always attempted to kill the gray Canada jay, because they thought it warned enemies of their approach.

In East Texas, as well as in other sections of the United States, children are warned not to blow their breath on a wren's egg for fear that it will not hatch. They are also told not to look inside this bird's nest, for if they do, it will be deserted by the owners. Those observers of the wrens' home life who have watched each day and have seen the first

egg in the nest augmented by the addition of others until the full clutch of eight or nine were deposited, will hardly agree with this belief. In some Texas localities, it is considered unlucky to kill a wren.

Very few members of the owl family have escaped figuring in folk tales. According to frontier belief, the burrowing, or "prairie-dog," owl shares subterranean burrows with rattlesnakes and prairie dogs, the curiously assorted company dwelling together in perfect unity! The barn, or "monkey-faced," owl (the owl of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and the suggester of numerous sombre lines in the works of other English poets) is distributed in several color phases over most of the habitable globe. It is especially common in Texas and its presence and cries are believed to foretell changes of weather, good or bad luck, even approaching sickness or death. "Never disturb a barn owl that sits between you and the moon—it will bring bad luck," is an old English superstition that early migrated into Texas. A curious superstition concerning the screech owl comes from the Brazos valley. I was told that when a small owl screeched incessantly in the neighborhood of a house, if one of the occupants were to turn over an old shoe, the bird's cries would immediately cease and it would betake itself to some other locality. When a screech owl screeches from the roof of a house which shelters a sick person, that person is doomed to die. An owl screeches or hoots often before an approaching gale. This is a weather sign still believed in many parts of Texas, but it was recorded by Virgil!

Many years ago, nearly forty I should say, I read a short note on the diminutive ground dove by Mr. Troup D. Perry, of Savannah, Georgia. Mr. Perry stated that this bird was in that section of the South known as the "moaning" dove, and that negroes believed that when it "moaned" frequently, some sick person in the neighborhood would soon be at death's door. The Carolina, or common, dove of Texas is even by whites called "mourning dove" on account of its melancholy notes. According to bottom negroes, this bird is also a "moaning" dove, and a prophet of approaching dissolution. Both the ground and common doves are found in southeastern Texas, and numerous are the negro folk-tales related of their uncanny



power to predict death. There are hundreds of black people in East Texas who originally came from the old Southern states, and they brought their mythology with them. Just as you must get your first glance of the new moon over your left shoulder, if you wish good luck, so "if you hear the first mourning dove note from above (in a tree or up the hill), you will prosper; if from below you, your course will thereafter be downhill."

The Inca dove, a small species of ground dove common in the lower Rio Grande valley, is considered by many Mexicans to be a bird of ill-omen. As bird classificationists, Mexicans are inferior to white crackers and bottomland negroes. Some years ago, while my friend James J. Carroll was studying the birds of southeastern Texas, he attempted to learn the Mexican vernacular names of all of the common species. He was only partly successful, for he discovered that the woodpecker and mockingbird were considered as belonging to the same family.

The migration of birds is a subject little understood by the generality of people, and it is not an unusual thing, even in this twentieth century and in the enlightened State of Texas, to find some person in the rural districts who still clings to the old European belief that, instead of migrating southward, swallows bury themselves in the mud of ponds and water-courses and there spend the winter. For do not these birds assemble in large numbers in September, suddenly disappear some evening, and keep out of sight until the following spring? However, much of the misinformation regarding migrating birds in the possession of most people is in the form of weather predictions and omens. The flying over of flocks of certain kinds of birds is supposed to indicate either rain or the early appearance of a norther. Canada geese may first appear in Texas by the last of September or the first of October, but if the weather is fair, they may fly high and be noticed by comparatively few persons. The flight may continue until November, and when a flock is seen flying low, say late in October, we are told the next morning by several persons that "geese flew over last night—we are due to have cold weather." As a matter of fact, the geese which reach Texas earliest in the fall are those birds that nest in the region just

south of Hudson Bay, while those which come later are probably birds from North Dakota, northern Minnesota and southern Canada. The old myth about geese nesting so far north that their nesting place has never been discovered was exploded generations ago but is still believed by many uninformed persons. At least one pair of Canada geese nested in Monroe County, Illinois, the writer's childhood home, and this locality is not many miles north of the Mason and Dixon line.

The following are some typical weather superstitions relating to birds, most of which have already been printed in different sources, but which I have heard in Texas within the last two decades.

Blackbirds' notes are very shrill before rain.

A solitary turkey buzzard seen flying at a great altitude indicates rain. A buzzard sitting on a fence or tree and raising his wings—"airing his body"—also indicates rain. Several turkey buzzards circling at a great height predict the coming of a norther.

If ducks fly early in the fall, the coming winter will be long and cold. (Mallards and teal usually arrive in Texas as early as the latter part of August, seldom later than the first week in September!)

When gulls fly high, there will be a flood. (Coast country of southern Texas.)

When the chachalaca cries in the night, it is a sign of rain. The chachalaca is a pheasant-like bird which inhabits the scrub in the Brownsville country, and this prophecy is strictly of Mexican origin.

Scissor-tailed flycatchers cry in the night just before a heavy rain. (Southern Texas.)

When pigeons fly high and circle around, a strong wind is coming.

Restlessness of migrating geese indicates a storm. The honk of the wild goose leader indicates that he is warning his flock to fly before an approaching norther.

The first flight of sandhill cranes precedes the first norther of the season.

The "curloo" of the long-billed curlew and the "quaily" of the field plover are uttered only when the birds are racing before a norther.

When crows form large flocks in Texas, a hard winter is sure to follow.

When woodpeckers peck low on trees, expect a hard winter.

When chickadees fly into town, expect a continuance of cold weather.

Large flights of robins and cedarbirds indicate that there will be a long, hard winter.

There will be no rain the day a "shitepoke" flies down the creek. In some localities, the "shitepoke" is the little green heron; in others, the little blue heron in white (juvenile) plumage. These identifications first led me to believe that the "shitepoke" was always some long-legged bird, but in two localities I heard the name applied to the belted kingfisher. Perhaps "shitepoke" means any fish-eating bird that inhabits the banks of creeks.

When a kingfisher flies up and down the creek frequently, uttering its rattling cry, there will be rain before the end of the day. (The kingfisher must be a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde sort of bird, for when he is in his rôle of "shitepoke," he contradicts this prophecy.)

The following are death and bad luck omens referring to common birds:

When a blackbird sings near you, bad luck will come. This is clearly a distorted importation. American blackbirds are starlings and their notes are harsh and unmusical. The European blackbird is the black thrush, one of the best songsters of the British Isles and temperate parts of the Continent. Ravens and rooks are black birds (in plumage) and it would be unusual to hear one of them singing. Probably some one got his black birds mixed. To kill a blackbird is to invite bad luck. This superstition is also an importation, but I have heard it in Texas. In England it is considered bad luck to kill a blackbird (black thrush) on account of its singing qualities.

The shadow of a buzzard crossing your path brings bad luck.

To see two crows flying together toward the left is considered unlucky.

If you are on your way to do business with some one and a bird crosses your path, you must turn back, for you will not have success that day.

If a bird flies near you, there will be a death in the family. There are numerous variations of this; if a black bird (black-colored bird), etc.

If a bird flies into the house, you will have bad luck. Sometimes the bird is named, as woodpecker, wren, etc.

If a red-headed woodpecker taps on the roof of a house, there will be a death in the family. (Most American woodpeckers have red on their heads, so that the subject of this superstition is not a single species but an aggregation of species.)

The phoebe, or pewee, flycatcher is calling some one of that name, "Phoebe, Phoebe."

It is lucky to see some species of birds. For instance, if you see a redbird (cardinal), make a wish and it will come true. In states farther east there are other "wish" birds, but none of them are common to Texas except as birds of passage.

The cowbird, or cow blackbird, was, on account of its habit of picking the ticks from bison and cattle, called "buffalo bird" by the early pioneers of the West. The fact that these birds who derived so much of their food from the buffalo have a habit of assembling in noisy flocks and wheeling in flight caused both Indians and pioneers to suspect that they were warning the buffalo herds of the approach of men.

Nuthatches are small insectivorous birds that inhabit the wooded regions of northern and eastern Texas. They have a habit of hanging with their heads down while they are searching for insects and are even said to roost frequently in the same manner. They are known as "devil-downheads" on this account, and many negroes call them "devil-birds" because, as octogenarians say, "Dey is allays lookin' down towa'd deir master, de debbil." Two species, the white-breasted and the brown-headed nuthatches, are found in eastern Texas, the latter bird being principally confined to pine regions.

The crested flycatcher, a small woodland bird that lays buff eggs curiously streaked with purple and reddish-brown and that generally uses in the construction of its nest the cast-off skin of a small serpent, is supposed to use the skin as a means of scaring intruders from the vicinity of its nest. I have been told this by both whites and negroes in Kansas,



Missouri, and Texas. There is nothing in the belief; several other species of birds occasionally use snake skin as nesting material.

Thousands of perfectly respectable members of the woodpecker family, which minister to trees by relieving them of borers and other destructive insects, have been killed because they were suspected of being "sapsuckers." The real culprits are three small woodpeckers of a single genus (*Sphyrapicus*) that really do damage trees by boring into them for sap. Only one of the three occurs in Texas, and this species is a winter resident only.

The "kildee," or kildeer, is a small plover widely distributed in Texas. It inhabits bottom lands and deposits its eggs on the bare soil, usually at the end of a corn row. Despoil a kildeer's nest and you will break a leg or an arm! The nests are very hard to find and many a youthful egg-collector would be almost willing to suffer a fracture of one of his limbs if he could but discover one.

Even our little friend whose cheerful cries of "Bobwhite" are so familiar is supposed to be an indicator of misfortune. "When two quails fly up in front of a man on his way to conclude a bargain, he will do well to abandon the intended business." I believe that I must have purloined the above language from Ernest Ingersoll (I have lost some of my references), but I have frequently heard this superstitious belief expressed by human lips. In one case it was a single quail, in another a whole covey.

The majority of the water birds seem to be free from superstitious regard. However, I can recall a few. The pied-billed grebe is a small bird inhabiting the fresh waters of North America. It is a skilful diver and only an expert marksman is able to shoot one while it is in the act of immersing its body. It can remain under water for long periods of time, and frequently when it first rises to the surface, it merely protrudes its short beak for the purpose of getting a breath of air. It is commonly known by two vernacular names: "didapper" and "hell diver," which is in more common use. The latter name is applied to it throughout the eastern and central states, and probably immigrated into Texas along with natives of those states. As this name is also in use by

East Texas negroes, it may be almost universal in North America. With whites, the vernacular designation is merely a nickname, but many of the negroes, who do not understand the grebe's habits, think that there is something weird about its disappearance, especially when it swims under water and fails to reappear in the same portion of the lake or stream.

The grotesque anhinga, or water turkey, inhabits swamps and the borders of lagoons in southeastern Texas. On account of its long, slender neck and reptile-like head, it is often called "snake bird." Southern negroes assume that it is not only a familiar of poisonous moccasin snakes but that it protects these reptiles from their enemies.

Two long-legged members of the snipe family, commonly known as the greater and lesser yellow-legs, are much detested by gunners on account of the repeated cries which they utter and which frequently alarm other water birds which these "Lords of Creation" are hunting. Many black people believe that these birds are really "tattlers" and that they make it their business to frequent localities haunted by other birds in order to warn them of the approach of gunners. Therefore yellowlegs are, in the vernacular, "telltals" or "tattlers."

I have heard other folk sayings dealing with small land birds but I have not been able to recall some of them while preparing this manuscript. I recollect having heard a story of the kingbird, the "bee martin," or "King of the Birds," but I do not at present remember all of its details. It was a negro story which perhaps some member of the Texas Folk-Lore Society can furnish in its entirety. The writer sincerely hopes that some of the readers of this screed will furnish to the society other stories and superstitions about birds, especially those from Mexican and Indian sources.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Various superstitions in Texas relating to birds have been recorded by E. R. Bogusch in "Superstitions of Bexar County," *Publications* No. V of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, pp. 112-125; also by J. Frank Dobie in "Weather Wisdom of the Texas-Mexican Border," *Publications* No. II, pp. 87-99.

## TALL TALES FOR THE TENDERFEET

BY A. W. PENN

When a year or so ago I was asked to address the Texas Folk-Lore Society on the subject of the ornithryncodiplodicus, the whiffle-pooffe, the milamo bird, and certain other remarkable fauna of the district known as the Conical Mountain Region of Central Texas, I was at first very certain that some mistake had been made. Folk-lore, according to Webster, is that body of rural superstitions, tales, and legends passed from generation to generation orally, mainly from the mouths of grandfathers sitting on the doorsteps at sundown while the grandchildren gather around and marvel at the good old days. Not of this nature are the coldly scientific facts regarding the ornithryncodiplodicus and other little known animals of the Conical Mountain Region of Central Texas. Parenthetically, it may be said that they are little known for two reasons: first, because of the innate laziness of the inhabitants of the region; secondly, because of the protective methods employed by these animals that they may not be seen or disturbed. The only similarity between the records which I am here setting down and the records that have already been printed in the *Publications* of the Texas Folk-Lore Society is that I can claim no more originality in recording them than the real Texas folk-lorists claim for recording certain of our most interesting and beautiful legends.

Know then that the region west of Austin was at one time a high rolling plateau in nature very similar to the prairie land north and east. In fact, the geologists claim that the two regions were in the distant past identical in form, one the continuation of the other. They say that as a result of a great break, known as the Balcones Fault, either the prairie lands to the east and north dropped down several hundred feet or the region west of the Colorado River was elevated an equal amount, producing such radical effect on the topography as to affect the animal life of the region.

Of the animals that roamed this upland region before the change in topography the strongest and the most peaceable was the ornithryncodiplodicus; but as time went on and the

erstwhile flat region over which he roamed became more and more hilly, his disposition became correspondingly rougher and rougher. He became, indeed, a savage creature. Nevertheless he retained his methodical habits—the kind of habits always associated with peaceableness. This methodical turn of mind had from the earliest times caused each individual ornithryncodiplodicus to graze exclusively on his own particular area without infringing on the rights of his neighbors; then as erosion and elevation made of the ornithryncodiplodicus habitat a series of cone-shaped hills and as each of the animals found his particular plot becoming a hill, he continued in his methodical way to graze on it. This meant that he grazed around and around the hill. The inevitable result was that his uphill legs became shorter than his downhill legs. Such a disproportion in anatomy further distempered the ornithryncodiplodicus disposition. From a peaceful, kindly, docile grazer of the open plateau, the animal became a ferocious destroyer of all life that came within the limits of his range. This range, however, was very limited, for while the downhill legs and the uphill legs enabled him to go evenly around and around the hill, they precluded his mobility on level ground or in any other than his predestined direction. Some of the species could circumambulate in clockwise fashion; some in counterclockwise fashion. A kind of jealousy arose between the individuals whose right legs were longer than their left legs and other individuals whose left legs were longer than their right legs.

Soon after the Conical Mountain Region grew out of the plateau, and after the disposition of the ornithryncodiplodicus had suffered such a grievous change, many of the native men were trapped on the hillsides and horribly mangled by the ferocious beasts. Not many of the natives, however, really knew anything about the strange beasts, for most of them early adopted, in one respect at least, the policy of the squirrel, always staying on the opposite side of the hill from any visitor. The name of the fierce animal came to be vulgarized into “mountain stem-winder,” but the more dignified appellation of ornithryncodiplodicus is not likely ever to be supplanted.

In time the natives learned how to cope with the beast, and only tenderfeet who strayed too far into the mountains never returned. The native method was this. When a man heard



the ferocious growls of a charging ornithryncodiplodicus and located the beast plunging towards him through the underbrush, he would go towards him with an innocent smile on his face, as if unaware of danger. Then when the onrushing peril was exactly within two steps of him, the native frontiersman would step two paces down hill. Of course the ornithryncodiplodicus, with two long legs on one side of his body and two short legs on the other side—at infinitely greater disadvantage than the kangaroo—could not follow. Nevertheless, impelled by his fierceness and his voraciousness, he would check himself, turn as best he could, and plunge recklessly after the native. Inevitably he tottered on his unequal legs for only a minute or so, and then he rolled screaming into the abyss below.

Such a downfall was always the occasion for great joy among all the beasts and birds of the region as well as among the people. The elephants would flit from bough to bough in fairy-like ecstasy. The humming birds would crash through the underbrush and set up a loud cackle around the body of the ornithryncodiplodicus. The perch and other fishes would float high above the mountain tops and hover over the scene. Eagles floated lazily in the shadowy waters, and the voice of every milamo bird in the country could be heard for a mile or more echoing and reverberating through the mountain fastnesses.

As the conical hills of this region elevated themselves and became mountains, circular lakes, as deep as the mountains were high and as wide as the mountains were broad, naturally developed. In these circular lakes lived the whiffle-pooffle, most prized of all mountain fishes and most difficult to catch. Only by means of a good rowboat, a very long auger and a faculty for telling stories, could any fisherman catch a whiffle-pooffle.

The fisherman would take his auger and row out to about the middle of the lake. Then he would bore a hole far down to the briniest depths of the deeps below. When the hole was adjudged to be sufficiently deep, the fisherman would pull up his auger and suspend a squidge over the hole. No other bait would entice the whiffle-pooffle, but when he smelt the delicious aroma of the squidge, he at once located the hole and climbed to the surface. The fisherman allowed him to devour the squidge. Now squidge after it is eaten has the effect of

swelling the eater, in this respect resembling hard-tack and water. As a consequence, the gorged whiffle-pooffle when he sought to reënter the hole and retire to his watery home, would find himself too bulky to get into the hole.

At this juncture the artistry of the fisherman was called into play. As soon as the whiffle-pooffle gave up the attempt to enter the hole, the fisherman would start telling the funniest story he knew. The whiffle-pooffle, having a very strong sense of humor, would crowd up close to the boat so as not to miss a word; of course this proximity was determined by the degree of funniness that the fisherman could put into the story. All the while as he talked the fisherman would be edging his boat towards shore. Then as he approached the point of his funny story, he would row very rapidly, at the same time pouring a bucket of grease out on the surface of the lake to make it slippery. Timing his story to conclude just as the boat was about to touch shore, the fisherman would turn sharply to the right, and the whiffle-pooffle, wiliest of fishes, would slide, helpless, high and dry on the bank—often, it is said, so convulsed with laughter that it never realized the fate awaiting it.

That the greenness of the tenderfeet might ever be kept verdant, the old-timers had tales of many other strange "animules" that once inhabited the wastes of Texas. The club-tailed glyptodont, which placed large rocks on top of small ones and then batted them to the top of high slopes just to see the rocks roll back, was one of the most entertaining inhabitants of the Conical Mountain Region. Evidences of his handiwork may be seen yet in the white streaks down the sides of the mountains where the rocks rolled back. The tail of this animal was hard and elastic and he rotated on his hind legs at a terrific rate and then "golfed" the teed-up rock far up the hillside. The eight-legged galliwampus, the tufted pocalunas, and the milamo bird often vicariously entertained those who cared to listen when the talk in the evening became serious and waxed scientific. Thus from the land of the tamale trees on the south to the barbed wire between Amarillo and the north pole, the stories of these strange survivors of the past have been handed on until the accurate details have been blurred with certain imaginary trimmings more appropriate to folk-lore than to science.

## FISHBACK YARNS FROM THE SULPHURS

BY J. M. DEAVER

In the terminology of early day Texans "the Sulphurs," or "on the Sulphurs," included all that territory in northeast Texas drained by the Sulphur River and lying between Big Cypress Creek and Red River. Here Ben Milam, perhaps before Moses Austin took up the colonization scheme, certainly by the time Stephen F. Austin reached Mexico City, negotiated to establish families. As a matter of fact, a considerable number of American families, who recognized neither the Mexican nor the United States government and who were known as the Pecan Point settlement, had been "on the Sulphurs" since 1814. They were the first American settlers in Texas. Some of Austin's first colonists crossed Red River into Texas at Pecan Point—about north of what is now Clarksville, Red River County—and tarried among the settlers to raise a crop of corn before going on down to the Brazos settlement. Thus the people on the Sulphurs claim legitimately a certain antiquity. Here, among water dogs (hellbenders), jointed snakes, hoop snakes, coons, persimmons, negroes with conjure bags, and tales of the Fishbacks, I was reared.

The Fishbacks, from Illinois, were among the first comers into the settlement. Clarksville, or part of it, is on a Fishback survey; in Titus County, twenty miles south, is Fishback Lake. Beside this lake lived the most illustrious member of the Fishback clan. Tales of his hairbreadth escapes and marvelous adventures early entered into the folk-lore of the country and are still told on the Sulphurs.

This extraordinary pioneer had one of the fastest race mares known to history. On one occasion while setting out from Clarksville to his cabin on Fishback Lake, twenty miles away, he glanced back and saw a heavy black cloud flying towards him from the north. A prudent man would have taken shelter and waited for the rain storm to pass before undertaking the journey; but Mr. Fishback felt confident that his nag could outrace the storm. Before he got "well strung out," however, the downpour was at his heels. He "pushed on the reins," and so fast did the mare run that the storm never gained an inch

on him. When he jumped off his mount at Fishback Lake the tail of his slicker, which had stretched out behind in his flight, and that portion of his mare that had been north of the saddle in her race south were wet; but Mr. Fishback was dry.

His rifle was as remarkable as his mare. One time while out hunting he observed twelve partridges perched in a row on a high limb. "Jes' look at me shoot the head off that first partridge," he said to the man who was with him. Slowly raising his gun and aiming, he pulled the trigger. When the smoke cleared away—for those were the days of black powder—he was surprised to see the twelve partridges still sitting quietly on the limb. He was dumbfounded. This was the first shot that he had ever missed in his life. Dropping his rifle and other hunting accouterments, he climbed the tree to discover, if possible, where his bullet had hit and the cause of his missing. On reaching the limb, he saw that his bullet had struck it in such a manner as to cause it to split open at the very place where the birds were perched and that it had then closed together so quickly as to catch the twenty-four feet of the twelve partridges. After that his rifle became more famous than ever.

Another time, while crossing Timber Lake in a canoe with a companion, Mr. Fishback dropped his powder-horn into the water. As he was not a very good diver, he hesitated to jump in after it. His companion offered to dive down for the horn, and Mr. Fishback accepted his offer. So the other man dived, carrying his own powder-horn with him. Mr. Fishback waited and waited for his friend to come up, but all that appeared on the surface of the water was some bubbles. Mr. Fishback got uneasy; then, remembering that his friend had taken a powder-horn with him, he became suspicious. Whereupon, he too dived down. There on the bottom of Timber Lake he found his friend sitting down and calmly pouring the powder from his, Fishback's, powder-horn into his own.

The Fishback family got their drinking water from the Sulphur River, some distance down the slope from their cabin. Mr. Fishback hauled it in a barrel on a slide, to which was hitched a horse. The traces of the harness for this horse were made of rawhide. One morning he hitched his horse to the slide and went down to Sulphur River to get a barrel of water. Just as he had finished dipping the barrel full of water, a sudden



shower came up. Mr. Fishback took refuge in a hollow tree until the shower was over; then he proceeded to lead his horse up hill. He noticed that the animal seemed to pull with considerable difficulty, but, attributing the cause to the slippery condition of the ground, or perhaps being too much occupied with his own thoughts to consider why, he did not look back to examine how the slide was pulling.

When he reached his log cabin he turned to unhitch. There was nothing to unhitch but the harness. The slide with its water barrel was nowhere in sight. But Mr. Fishback was not disturbed. The rain barrel at the end of the house had caught sufficient water from the shower to last through the day. He could go back tomorrow and get the slide. So he slipped the collar, hames, and traces off the horse and hung them over the stump of a live oak tree near the front gate. The sky was already clear and the sun was pouring down, drying the world.

Mr. Fishback went inside and got a cup of coffee, or maybe it was a sip of something else. At any rate when he some time later looked out the front door down the trail to the river he saw the slide, with the barrel of water on it, slowly coming towards the live oak stump. When it got within a few feet it halted. The rawhide traces, which the rain had moistened and caused to stretch considerably, had merely contracted under the sun's heat.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In the old days it used to be said that Texas was "held together by rawhide." No folk tale has been more common in Texas, or in the western half of America, than this yarn based on the ductile nature of wet rawhide and the contracting powers of drying rawhide. Professor Killis Campbell of the University of Texas has called my attention to Robert Frost's use of the yarn in "Paul's Wife" [Paul Bunyan's Wife], *New Hampshire*. Stewart Edward White's story called "Rawhide," in *Arizona Nights*, makes exceedingly effective use of the characteristics of rawhide popularized in the folk yarns.—EDITOR.

## PAUL BUNYAN: OIL MAN

BY JOHN LEE BROOKS

In the logging camps of the North Woods some time near the middle of the last century appeared a mythical hero of gigantic proportions and incredible cleverness: Paul Bunyan. Never showing himself actually, this figure grew in reputation until he became the ideal and idol of all woodsmen and the continual subject of their "tall tales." With that splendid freedom of imagination so typical of our native humor, the loggers of the big woods began to body forth in Paul Bunyan a glorification of their own virtues and vices. Every evening camp-fire brought forth new anecdotes of miraculous feats of strength or examples of unbelievable ingenuity. Everyone had his part in these fictions, but usually among the rest was a tale-teller who by the superior mendacity of his imagination delighted every woodsman and mystified the half-credulous greenhorn.<sup>1</sup> Before the close of the nineties Paul Bunyan was known from Maine to Minnesota, and in a few years had found his way as far to the south as Louisiana and as far west as Oregon.<sup>2</sup>

The origin of these legends is the subject of much conjecture. Mr. James Stevens<sup>3</sup> believes that he has traced the original of the mighty logger in a certain bearded giant named Paul Bunyon, who fought with the other French-Canadians in the Papineau Rebellion of 1837 against the newly-crowned Victoria. In this brief struggle Bunyon gained wide fame as a powerful, dauntless fighter. This fame helped him later in establishing and operating a logging camp. Miss Esther Shephard<sup>4</sup> finds evidences that point with equal uncertainty to a French-Canadian origin, with possible old-world antecedents, and to an American origin, probably in Michigan

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<sup>1</sup>James Stevens, *Paul Bunyan*, Introduction, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>I have the statement of Bob ———, oil-worker now of Breckenridge, Texas, that he heard stories about Paul Bunyan in the lumber camps near Bogalusa, Louisiana.

<sup>3</sup>James Stevens, *Paul Bunyan*, 1925, Introduction, p. 1 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Esther Shephard, *Paul Bunyan*, 1924, Introduction, p. 8.

or Wisconsin. All other attempts to trace a definite genesis of this legend appear quite as unconvincing or vague as these, especially in view of the traditional tendency of the old-timers to bolster the authenticity of their stories with references to utterly fictitious personal acquaintanceships with Paul Bunyan or some of his crew.

Whatever may have been the source of this striking figure, his development into epic proportions has been American. The loggers of the northern states have made him their own, the personification of their ideals. Spreading rapidly over the United States, the Bunyan myth has taken root wherever there were trees to be felled, and has flourished luxuriantly in this richly sympathetic soil. Paul Bunyan has taken a place with historical American heroes like David Crockett, Daniel Boone, and Kit Carson; he has become a prototype for mythical heroes like Tony Beaver in the lumber industry of West Virginia, Pecos Bill among the cowboys of the Southwest, and Kemp Morgan among the rotary drillers in the oil fields.

With the development of the oil industry in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was quite natural that the heroic Paul Bunyan should be adopted into a trade which called for just as much strength as logging and even more courage, determination, and resource. Beginning in West Virginia, Paul became the embodiment of superhuman ability as an oil man, and he was known wherever there were American oil-workers.

My introduction to this legendary figure came during the summer of 1920 spent in the Hewitt field, near Ardmore, Oklahoma. I was learning the game as a "boll-weevil" and so was the victim of many "sells," such as being sent for a left-handed monkey-wrench or the pipe-stretchers. The old-timers particularly enjoyed making casual references to miraculous time and labor saving practices that the powerful and ingenious Paul Bunyan used on his rig. There was nothing, however, like a cycle of stories; there were no extended tales.

A year later I returned to the oil field, this time near Breckenridge, Texas, where I worked for several months in a gasoline plant. At last I got a chance to go out as a tool-dresser, or helper, on a standard (cable tool) drilling rig.

Both my driller and the one on the opposite tour<sup>5</sup> were old heads, having started back in West Virginia twenty or thirty years earlier. Paul Bunyan was an old friend of theirs, and occasionally, in their lighter moods, they amused themselves and "kidded" me by calling to mind some of his exploits.

The coming of the casing crew, however, brought out the freest expressions of Bunyan stories. When the work was going on smoothly, there was a continual flow of profane banter, which involved always a good deal of "fancy lyin'." The presence of a rank "boll-weevil" furnished a perfect opportunity to try their memories and imaginations in telling of the famous Paul. Their yarns were addressed ostensibly to everyone but me, yet even though I didn't say a word, there were huge laughs and elaborately casual glances at me that were unmistakably significant. They watched every move I made with keenly critical eyes, and offered the most ironical suggestions by way of help, mentioning Paul as an authority; or they told some time later, with apparently no reference to my work, of what Paul Bunyan once did to a "boll-weevil" who spliced a rope in a certain way (exactly my way, of course). Nothing I could say, not even a disgusted "Aw, Hell!" failed to call out roars of laughter and many slappings of shoulder and leg.

During a two years' absence from the field I learned to appreciate the Bunyan myth as folk-lore and went back not to work but to collect Bunyaniana. I drifted along the trail of the oil development through Ranger, Breckenridge, Eastland, Cisco, Big Lake, Best, and finally to McCamey, the latest frontier. I had been having the typical luck of the folk-lorist—picking up here and there a mannerism, an incident, or running across a grizzled driller who knew Paul Bunyan but just couldn't remember any stories right then. At McCamey, however, where things were doing, I hoped to find Paul Bunyan in action.

McCamey was certainly the place for him—a regular boom town of more than a thousand inhabitants. It had risen on a dry sage brush flat within six months after the discovery of

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<sup>5</sup>"Tour" is oil field argot for shift, and is invariably pronounced "tower." In the fields in which I worked the twenty-four hours of labor were divided evenly between two "tours."



oil. The main street (the road that led through) was growing hourly as new shacks were thrown together. Far out over the flat were tents and board hovels, with camp-fires smoking. Great truck loads of pipe, rigs, and lumber thundered by in clouds of alkali dust. Automobiles careened recklessly along, the proportion of those with tool-racks indicating the proximity of actual drilling operations. Occasional horse-drawn water wagons provided drinking water from the Pecos River or from the tanks of the water train, at \$1 a barrel. (There were no adequate wells in McCamey.) Along the walks (wooden porches of the stores and "joints," at various levels) stalked or lounged typical "boomers," looking, if broke, for a chance to "get out," and cow-hands hoping for any sort of a job that would beat their \$50 a month on the ranch. From casual groups drifted scraps of well talk: "runnin' the ten-inch tonight"; "fishin' job—lost a string o' tools—maybe drill by 'em"; "in the sand a foot and she's makin' fifty barrels an hour."

My hopes were not justified by the results. Paul Bunyan did not reign here and revel. I loafed about, raking up speaking acquaintances with all who looked as if they might even have heard of Paul and buying drinks for half the idlers in McCamey, but I found no one who gave me more than a reminiscent smile and perhaps a slight incident or two. I went out to the camps, but I found no considerable body of narrative. Either I failed to discover an old-time tale-teller with the genuine creative fancy, or I lacked the key to unlock their word-hoards. My efforts resulted in a heterogeneous mass of incidents that spoke of Paul Bunyan more often as a rig-builder and driller, but also as a pipeliner, a tank-builder, and even as a constructor of telegraph lines.

These fragmentary incidents, I became convinced, were the shreds of a widespread and varied legend of Paul Bunyan as an oil field hero; yet the legend, new as it was in a comparatively new industry, seemed to be succumbing to the machinery of modern life so fatal to all folk creation. I have tried to give this disjected material a semblance of coherence.

Paul Bunyan appears in the oil-fields as a jack of all trades who nevertheless is proficient in each far beyond the best of his rivals. He is regarded by the different groups of

workers as having had a large part in developing the tools and methods of their trade. His own huge strength and uncanny skill, however, enable him often to discard the slow and cumbersome conventional practices. For instance, as a rig-builder, as the oil-field carpenter is called, he demonstrated clearly that he was supreme. He could sight so accurately that no plumb line was necessary. The arduous and difficult job of "pulling," "running," and "sighting" a derrick, *i.e.*, building it, took Paul only one day, thereby saving two days of the usual time, as well as the labor of two men. The customary hatchet was too light for him; his weighed eight pounds and drove any nail to the head at a single blow. He could build a pair of the great wooden "bull wheels"<sup>9</sup> in half a day, hang the massive "walking-beam"<sup>7</sup> by himself, and "skid a rig" (the whole derrick) several yards over by hand. If any timbers, or even the crown block,<sup>8</sup> fell off the structure in the process of building, Paul, who worked below, caught them in his hands to save the lumber as well as the heads of those who might be underneath.

Bunyan was such a powerful and tireless worker, and so considerate of his men, that he used to let them sleep half the tour while he did alone the work of the crew of five. His childish pride in his own ability led him to perform many stunts. One day without help he built a rig and "spudded in"<sup>9</sup> the hole with a Ford motor. He boasted that he could dig faster with a "sharp-shooter"<sup>10</sup> than any crew could drill, but since he could never find anyone to call his bet, he did not try this feat. It was not uncommon for him, whenever he grew impatient in building a rig, to drive a sixteen-pound hammer into the ground so deep that the oil came to the surface without drilling. This practice was deplored by the

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<sup>6</sup>The "bull-wheels" form the large reel on which the drilling cable is wound.

<sup>7</sup>The "walking-beam" is a great wooden beam that is worked with a seesaw action by the engine, raising and lowering the tools in the hole for drilling.

<sup>8</sup>The crown block is the wooden block on top of the derrick; it holds the pulley wheels over which the steel cables run.

<sup>9</sup>"Spudded-in"—*i.e.*, started the hole. The first two or three hundred feet of hole is drilled in a special manner without the walking-beam.

<sup>10</sup>A "sharp-shooter" is a long narrow spade.

operators because it called for the very inconvenient and wasteful task of dipping the oil out of the hole.

Sometimes Paul's fiery nature caused even greater losses. The visits of officious "high-powers"<sup>11</sup> often made him lose control of his hot temper. At these times the crew ran frantically for cover and left him to vent his rage in a wholesale smashing of derricks for a mile around. The most violent manifestation of this weakness brought him a fortune. One day while up in the derrick, he grew terribly angry at one of his crew who was below. Paul hurled his hatchet at the man with such force that, missing its aim, it penetrated the ground so far that oil gushed up. Quickly forgetting his anger, Paul and his crew set about casing and cementing the hole. The well brought him a million dollars, every cent of which he spent for Mail Pouch tobacco.<sup>12</sup> He had conceived the scheme of soaking his tobacco in corn whiskey and making a "clean-up" by selling it to the oil-field "bullies." His own appetite got the better of him, however, and he chewed it all himself.

Paul did not waste his time with derricks of the usual size. His structures towered far above their conventional neighbors and had telephone connections for each member of the crew. After drilling started, the derrick man was able to come down only twice a month, for pay-day. On one occasion Paul determined to break his record for height. He built the structure up, up, up until it became so tall that he and his crew moved to Heaven and lived there while they finished their work. Paul determined to drill a well worthy of his derrick. He penetrated to China before he stopped drilling.

While building another tall rig, at Bakersfield, California, Paul had a remarkable experience. He was up on the derrick at work when a terrific wind storm carried him out to sea. His first conscious moment found him alone in the Pacific 500 miles from land with his hatchet in his hand, astride a board. A whale appeared and attacked him. Paul fell into the water,

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<sup>11</sup>"High-powers" are officials of high rank in the company controlling the drilling.

<sup>12</sup>Mail Pouch chewing tobacco is perhaps the favorite brand in the oil field; Beechnut is a close second.

killed the big fish with a single blow of his hatchet, and, mounting the dead whale, paddled with his plank back to California.

As a driller Paul Bunyan is quite as striking a figure. He was equally at home on a rotary or on a standard rig; in fact, he devised most of the implements and practices of the trade. His naive humor is seen in the names used by every driller, toolie, and rough-neck: the "head-ache post"; "Maud," the heavy break-out tongs; "bull-wheel" and "calf-wheel"; the "lazy-bench," and many other names.<sup>13</sup> On his own rig, when he was using a rotary, he did not unjoint the drill-stem in small sections, to be stacked in the derrick, but simply ran the 2,000 feet of steel pipe up into the air and held it in his hands until the bit was changed. For his own convenience, to allow him to leave the rig, he invented a way of winding the drill-pipe around a big drum. He thus saved many days of the time usually required to drill a well. His boilers were so big that anyone who carelessly went near the injectors<sup>14</sup> was sucked up inside. If a boiler blew up, Paul jumped astride it and rode it back safely to earth; he would not be baffled by such annoyances as that.

His experiences on a standard tool rig were often bizarre and colorful. One time while drilling in a mountainous country, he ran on to a "granite-rock" and pounded for a week without making any apparent progress. He put on an extra set of jars<sup>15</sup> without any effect; a third and a fourth set of jars did not help materially, and he finally put on fifteen sets in a desperate effort to save the hole. The terrific pounding jarred the whole lease up fifty feet above the surrounding land before he broke through the rock. On another mountain-side location Paul drilled what seemed to be a very deep hole. Finally he ran into "soft diggin'"<sup>16</sup> and decided to set casing

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<sup>13</sup>For explanation of the terms see "Oil Field Diction," by A. R. McTee, *Publications* No. IV (1925) of the Texas Folk-Lore Society.

<sup>14</sup>The injector sucks water, usually from a depression in the ground, forcing it into the boiler.

<sup>15</sup>The jars are two heavy steel links attached above the drill stem, allowing several inches of play and therefore increasing the shock of the blow.

<sup>16</sup>"Soft diggin'" and "tough diggin'" are common expressions for soft and hard rock.



before going any farther. He started putting in the casing; it kept going down until it seemed that it wouldn't stop. At last one of the crew who had gone over to another location on an errand came running back to tell him that the pipe was coming out the other side of the mountain. Paul discovered that the "tough diggin'" had deflected the tools; he had drilled through the mountain; the casing had run out and made a pipe-line for two miles down the valley. Another experience was more tragic. Paul was drilling in Mexico this time. There was a heavy flow of rubber that drenched the whole rig and cooled before it could be washed off. The poor toolie, who was up in the derrick, could not keep his hold on the slippery boards and fell. He hit the rubber-covered floor and bounced for three days and nights. They finally had to shoot him to keep him from starving to death.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the strangest of all Paul's experiences came as the result of an accident. One day he carelessly allowed himself to be caught in the steel drilling cable while the bit was being lowered into the hole. Before he could be stopped he found himself at the bottom of the well in a large cavity in a very warm atmosphere. "It was hot as Hell down there," Paul described the atmosphere later. He soon found that he actually was in Hell. Walking on deeper into the mountain cave, he met the Devil, who greeted him warmly, as if the famous driller were perfectly known to him. The Devil took him all around the place, and at last showed him the harem. The beauties were so ravishing that Paul tried to carry one along, and the Devil in a rage chased him back up the well. Before Paul left, however, he settled a certain question that had been bothering him. Some time before, a "roustabout" who had a grudge against him had sneaked up behind him, cut off his leg, and thrown it down the well. Paul had never grown accustomed to his wooden leg; so while down in Hell he asked about his lost flesh-and-blood limb. The Devil told him it was already roasting on the coals and that he could not have it.

Paul Bunyan would never admit defeat until forced to do so, and then he always made the best of his losses. A particularly good example of his pertinacity and grit is seen in an exploit

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. the story of Pecos Bill's "bouncing bride," "Pecos Bill," the *Century Magazine*, October, 1923.

of his out on the California coast. He was shooting a well,<sup>18</sup> but the charge of five hundred quarts of nitro-glycerine exploded while going down the hole. A terrific flow of oil caught the crew altogether unprepared to take care of it. Before they could think, Paul jumped to the well and sat upon the pipe, stopping the flow. The incredible pressure of gas and oil thus restrained forced the casing out of the ground, carrying Paul up in the air so high that he stayed three days before a derrick could be built to rescue him. The well was capped and the oil saved. Paul lost only two holes in his long drilling career. The first loss occurred in the Texas Panhandle. He drilled into an alum bed and the hole shrank up tight, catching the tools so firmly that they could not be released. The second misfortune was just a "piece of hard luck" that Paul could not help. He had been drilling for several months on the top of a very high hill. One night just before the "grave-yard shift"<sup>19</sup> came on, a fearful windstorm struck the location, driving with such velocity that it blew all the dirt away from the hole. There was nothing for Paul to do but saw the well up and sell it for post-holes. Another of the rare failures of Bunyan was his attempt to transplant "dry holes"<sup>20</sup> to Europe. They were of no use over here, and besides saving a lot of drilling over there, they might make wells. They were all warped, however, in the rough trip over the waves and had to be thrown away.

Paul Bunyan is known in practically all phases of the oil game, as well as in other trades where he can find hairy-chested bullies for comrades and workers. He is never seen in a "white-collar" job, but is always out where there is "somethin' doin'," with no time for effeminacies of dress and manners. The pipeliners, the roughest crew to be found in the oil fields, tell of Paul's big camp for which he laid a pipeline to furnish buttermilk for his men. According to them, he was a giant with only one arm, and that in the middle of his chest. His tongs were so heavy that four men were required to carry them. The tank-builders say that Paul's first

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<sup>18</sup>"Shooting a well" is exploding a charge of nitro-glycerine, "soup," at the bottom of the hole to break up the sand and stimulate the flow of oil.

<sup>19</sup>The "grave-yard shift" works from twelve at night till twelve noon.

<sup>20</sup>A "dry hole," a "duster," is one which did not produce oil.

tank was so high that a hammer which he dropped from the top one day wore out two handles before it hit the ground. Among the telegraph construction men Bunyan also stands out as the leader of them all. They speak of him boastingly as the builder of the Mason and Dixon line.

These various manifestations of the Paul Bunyan theme evidence its vitality and suggest that it is thoroughly and typically native. Paul Bunyan of the oil fields, like Paul Bunyan of the logging camps, is another addition to American folk-lore. In the homogeneity of their interests and in their relative isolation from books and other distractions of civilization, hairy-chested American laborers of the twentieth century have made him their super-hero.

## PIPELINE DAYS AND PAUL BUNYAN

BY ACEL GARLAND

It was evening. The sun hung like a sandy ball above the rim of dull mesquite that surrounded the pipeline camp. For three weeks the line had been extending through a lifeless country of mesquite and dust. For three weeks the men had been broiling under the August sun with not even a wind to make the heat less deadening. Now they were sprawled on the grass in easy after-supper positions. Forming a half circle about the cook-shack, they rested uncomfortably and "razzed" the lone fat man who had not yet finished eating. "Fat" was always last—last to start work, last to stop eating, and certainly last to stop talking. "Fat" ate on, unconcerned with their tired humor. Gradually the men drifted into small groups and lay droning a preparation for the evening's talk.

"Git a scoop. That's what you need, Fat."

"Move the chuck wagon and he'll starve to death. He's too damn lazy to follow it."

"Hey, Fat, did you ever get all you wanted to eat?"

"They ought to grow square beans so he could get more of them on his knife."

"Talk about eating. Tell you what I saw once," said one who aspired to Fat's position as the camp's chief liar. "I saw a man eat a whole ham once—well, not exactly a whole ham, we had eaten a meal off it—not exactly we, my brother-in-law Jim and his family. The man came to the house one morning and wanted something to eat. Sis was busy and didn't have no time to be fooling with him; so she just set the table and put this ham on it and then went on about her housework or whatever she was doing. Well, when she come back the man was gone and so was the ham—all except the bone and it had been gnawed so dry that even the dog wouldn't touch it. That's the God's truth. Jim swears it's the truth."

The men howled derisively, and Fat, who had been listening half attentively, arose from his stool and sauntered into the center of the group.

"Did you say something about eating?" he said. "Well, I had a funny thing happen to me the other day in Wichita



Falls. I goes into one of them restaurants down by the railroad tracks to eat. When I come in I saw a couple of tough hombres setting at the counter and they looks me over kind of amused like. But I just goes on back and sets down a couple of seats from them. After a while the waiter comes out from behind and goes over to where they are setting and asks them what they want.

"They was sure tough looking birds, and one of them speaks up and says, 'Gimme a T-bone steak a inch and a quarter thick. Just scorch it.' And he looks over at me kinda mean like.

"But I didn't pay him no mind but just set there. So the other one pulls his hat 'way down over his eye, and says, 'Gimme a hind quarter. Raw!' And then they both looks over at me.

"Well, when the waiter come over to where I am setting, I says to him, 'Gimme a sharp butcher knife and then just cripple a steer and run him through here. I'll cut off what I want!'"

"Speaking of steers," the Contender put in, "did you ever hear about the cattle line that Paul Bunyan laid from his ranch to Chicago?"

"Well, Paul he got tired of paying such high freight to get his stock to market; so he just laid a pipeline all the way to the stockyards in Chicago and pumped them through it. Everything went all right except that the pipe was so big that the calves and half-grown yearlin's would get lost in the threads and starve to death before they could get to the outside. And one time the line sprung a leak and Paul lost thirty-five carloads of cattle before he could get it corked [caulked]. But he sure did do a good job of corking when he did get to it."

"How the devil did he cork a hole that big?" asked Fat after a minute or two of silence.

"Why with B. S., you big windbag, same as that that you have been spouting off."

Fat sat for a moment trying to think of a way to "get back at" the Contender. Then he started off on a new trail.

"You know so much about Paul Bunyan," he said. "Did you ever hear about that big steer that he had? He called her Babe and she just measured forty-two pick-handle lengths

and the width of a size seven derby hat between the eyes. And strong! Why that steer could pull anything!

"I remember one time when we was drilling a well down Breckenridge way. Wasn't much of a hole, just sixteen inches. Well, we drilled and drilled and didn't ever strike nothing—except dust, and a God's plenty of that; so finally Paul he said we might as well give it up as a dry hole and let it go at that.

"But Paul was mad! He swore around for two or three days and smashed the derrick into kindling wood and was about to quit drilling when he saw a advertisement in the paper by some bird out on the plains that wanted to buy some post-holes. Ten thousand post-holes it was he wanted. Ten thousand holes three feet long.

"Well, Paul he hitched a chain around this duster hole and hooked up Babe and pulled fifteen thousand feet of it out of the ground. He got mad again because the hole broke off and left over half of it in the ground. But directly he said that they wasn't no use of a post-hole being sixteen inches across; so he just quartered the hole and then sawed it up into the right lengths.

"You know out on the plains they have a awful hard time digging post-holes, or any other kind of holes for that matter. The soil out there is only about a foot deep till you strike solid rock and they can't dig through this rock a-tall.

"Why, them guys used to come down into East Texas and buy all the old wells and dug-outs that they could get a-hold of and cut them up to use for post-holes. I used to know a feller down there that could dig and stack on cars more old wells than any man I ever saw before. He could stack twenty-nine of them on cars in a day and take two hours off for dinner.

"They finally moved so many wells from down there that they ruined the water; so they was a ordinance passed against it. But that didn't stop it. They bootlegged them out to the plains. I knew one guy that got rich bootlegging them. He had a patented jack that would lift a well or a dug-out right out of the ground.

"It don't do much good to build fences out on the plains, though. That there wind out there is awful. Soon as a man gets a good fence built, along comes the wind and blows it away, posts, post-holes, and all. Why, that wind even blows

wells away and a guy told me that he seen it turn prairie dog holes wrong side out it blew so hard. But I never did believe that. Them guys are awful liars. One of them told me he had a horse throw him so high one time that he had to catch a-holt of a cloud to keep from falling and killing himself. It's cold out there too—"

"I'll say it is," a pipeliner broke in. "Like that guy that was up in Canada somewheres when it was fifty degrees below. He come up to another guy and said, 'God, man, wouldn't you hate to be in Amarillo today?'"

"Ja ever hear about them wells out in Colorado where the oil freezes when it comes out of the ground?" asked the Contender. "They can't pipe it away; so they just let it spout out on the ground and then shovel it into wagons with scoops and haul it off."

"That's like some of them wells that Paul Bunyan drilled in over at Smackover," said someone. "They was gushers and blew in so strong that they had to put roofs over the derricks to keep the oil from spouting a hole in the sky."

"I worked for Paul out in Arizona on the biggest well that I ever worked on," resumed the Contender. "It was a seventy-five-inch hole. It was, and we had to make a derrick so tall that it had to be hinged in two places and folded up before the sun and stars could pass. Took a man fourteen days to climb to the top of it. It did. And Paul had to hire thirty derrick men so we could have a man on top all of the time. They was always fourteen men going up and fourteen men coming down, a man on top and a man off tower,<sup>1</sup> all the time. And they was dog houses built a day's climbing apart for the men to sleep in while they was going up and down.

"Why, when that well blew in, it took three days for the oil to reach the top of the derrick, and it rained oil for a week after we had got it capped.

"It was some well. We drilled it with one of Paul's patented rotary rigs. Never could have drilled so deep—it was sixty thousand feet—if Paul hadn't used flexible drill pipe. We

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<sup>1</sup>The reader may take his choice of spellings: "tower" or "tour." The word is pronounced "tower," and means a shift of men. The drilling crews work in two towers of twelve hours each, from twelve o'clock to twelve. The tower that goes on at midnight is the "graveyard tower"; the one that goes on at noon is the "gravy tower."

just wound the drill stem up on the draw-works. Take a devil of a long time to come out of the hole if we had had to stack it.

"Well, when we was down sixty thousand and three feet, the well blew in. And when we had come out of the hole we seen that we had forgot to case it. Well, Paul he called out both towers and made up the casing on the ground—about ten miles of seventy-five-inch casing—and then he just picked it up and dropped it down into place."

"I worked for Paul on one of them deep wells once," said Fat. "It was out in Arkansas. Jimmy Blue was running the rig and we was drilling with standard tools. We got down thirty thousand feet and struck a rock formation that a bit wouldn't touch. And we was using a pretty good sized bit too, drilling a fifty-inch hole.

"Well, we worked on this formation for three weeks without doing any good and then we called up Paul. Paul he come out there and took charge of the rig himself and worked for three more weeks, day and night, without doing anything except ruin a lot of bits. And finally he got so mad that he jumped down on the derrick floor and pulled up the bit with his hands. Then he threw it down into the hole as hard as he could throw it. Well, we busted the rock that time. The bit just kept on going and when the line run out it pulled derrick, rig, and all into the hole after it.

"We got a gusher that time. But when Paul seen that the rig had pulled Jimmy into the hole with it he was just about to plug off the hole and abandon it. But in a few days we got a telegram from Jimmy in China saying that he had a 100,000 barrel gusher and was spudding in on another location."

"Did any of you guys work for Paul on that big line he laid?" asked the Contender. "Well, I worked for him on that 101-inch aluminum line that he laid from Pennsylvania to California. We laid it to pipe buttermilk out to his camp out there. Paul liked buttermilk so well himself that he had a twenty-four-inch petcock running wide open all the time to catch enough for him to drink."

"Yeh," said Fat, "I know all about that. I helped Paul drill the buttermilk well that furnished that line. We drilled down thirty-two thousand feet and then struck a formation of corn-



bread. We drilled for five hundred feet through the cornbread and then for twelve hundred feet through solid turnip greens—except that every few feet would be a layer of fried sowbelly. That's where the old song started: 'Cornbread, Butter-milk, and Good Old Turnip Greens.' "

"Fat, did you ever see Paul's wife?" asked a young boll-weevil who had started to work only a few days before. "She had a wooden leg and she was so homely that we used to scrape enough ugly off her face every day to mud off a well. The hardest six months' work I ever put in was painting that wooden leg of hers."

"When Paul worked on the highlines he had a wooden leg himself," added an ex-linesman. "It was ninety feet long and the men used to wear one out every three days climbing up to bum him for cigarettes."

"Paul discovered perpetual motion—of the jaw—when he got Fat to work for him," said the Contender.

"Huh," said Fat, "only perpetual motion Paul ever discovered was one time down in India. We was drilling a ninety-inch hole with standard tools. And when we got down twenty-seven thousand feet we struck the root of a rubber tree and the bit never did stop bouncing. Had to abandon the hole."

"I worked—" the Contender began.

"Yeh, and on another one of them wells we was drilling a eighty-inch offset. Had them big derricks all around us. And our camp was setting so far back in them derricks that we had to pipe the daylight in. We drilled down nearly fifty thousand feet and struck a flowing vein of alum water and the hole, rig, and everything drew up until we had to abandon it."

"Paul sure had drilling down to a fine point," said the Contender. "Why I worked for him on one hole where we was using rubber tools. We would just start the tools bouncing and then go to sleep until it was time to change the bit. And the men was so fast that the driller would just bounce the bit out of the hole and they would change it before it could fall back."

"Paul's camps wasn't nothing like this dump," said Fat. "I worked for him on a ninety-inch line once and we had so many men in the camp that it took fifteen adding machines running day and night to keep track of their time. Paul invented the first ditching machine while we was laying this line

through Arkansas. He bought a drove of them razorback hogs and trained them to root in a straight line."

"You telling about that cattle line of Paul's a while back reminds me of the trees that used to grow down on the Brazos," said the "Old Man." "One time I was working through that country with a herd of cattle and come up to the river where I couldn't ford it. While I was setting on my horse looking at the water I heard a big crash up the river and when I went up to see what it was, it was a tree had fallen across the river. It was one of them big holler trees. So I just drove my herd across the river through the holler of it. But when I got to the other side and counted the herd I seen that they was nearly three hundred steers missing and I went back to look for them. They had wandered off into the limbs and got lost."

"That reminds me of the sand storms that they used to have down in East Texas," said the Contender. "One time they was a nigger riding along one of them sandy roads on a jackass and he stopped to go down to the creek and get a drink and tied the mule to a sapling by the side of the road. While he was gone it come one of them sand storms and when he come back he seen his ass hanging by the tie-rope about seventy feet up in a tree. The sand had blown away from under him and just left him hanging there."

"Say," said Fat, "did any of you guys ever see Paul Bunyan in a poker game. The cards he used were so big that it took a man five hours to walk around one of them. Paul used to play a lot of poker that time we was digging Lake Michigan to mix concrete in when we was building the Rocky Mountains. A little while after that we dug Lake Superior for a slush pit for one of them big wells we was drilling. Any of you birds want to play some poker?"

This, from Fat, was the signal for retiring. The sun was long past set and mosquitoes were buzzing in the darkened mesquite. Silently the men stalked off toward their tents—all except two or three who followed Fat to his tent for a session at poker.

## LE LOUP BLANC OF BOLIVAR'S PENINSULA

BY PHILIP C. TUCKER

This is a tale of Bolivar's Peninsula, which for thirty miles curtains Galveston Bay east of Galveston. The time of the tale is before a railroad, which now runs the length of the peninsula, was built and before the storm of 1900 swept most of the old settlements away. At the time of which I speak, along in the nineties, I used to take a sail boat at Galveston, sail up to Peiper's Grove, land, then on a cow pony ride up the trail to the home of my Cajun friends, to hunt ducks and geese. In those days Bolivar's Peninsula was a forlorn outland, seldom visited. The sparse habitations, miles apart, were of farmers, cattlemen, and market hunters. Most of the inhabitants, excepting the French Cajuns, of Louisiana extraction, were foreign born, among them some runaway sailors and criminals.

The Cajuns had many stories of a ghost wolf that was white—*le loup blanc*, and of werewolf too—*loup-garou*. No bullet could kill *le loup blanc*, and no matter how close he was crowded he always escaped. I shall try to give the setting as I remember it for one of these stories, told in Cajun dialect. I originally contributed the story to *Forest and Stream*, and it was printed in that periodical, October 30, 1909.

It was a wild night. A wet norther at sunset had swept down across the prairie and now whipped the bare branches of the china trees and whirled and whined about the corners of the house like a thing possessed. It swept on across the marsh, and the roar of the Gulf surf but a few hundred feet away mingled with its moan.

Out at the cow pen, yet visible in the twilight, the cattle huddled behind the scanty stack of prairie hay and the calf shed, tails turned toward the wind, heads drooping, and backs arched in abject misery. The driving rain dripped from their soaked hides in streams as they crowded together in their efforts to gain a little warmth by physical contact.

Beyond, in the pony corral, the cavayard had drifted to the southernmost corner, where, further progress stopped by the high fence, they, like the cattle, crowded together for warmth,

On the prairie might have been heard the constant crunch and swish of hoofs churning the wet earth into slush, as stock drifted southward before the icy wind, seeking shelter. They traveled mostly in silence, though now and again a distressed "moo" broke from some isolated straggler, who for the moment lost touch with his neighbors. They came mostly in single file, a group of six or a dozen, sullenly tramping in each other's tracks.

Inside *la maison*, it was more comfortable. The large earthen fireplace was piled high with oak back log and china tree faggot that blazed and snapped in defiance of the wind that swirled down the wide chimney and sent gusts of smoke eddying into the room. Around the fire in a semicircle, on rawhide-seated chairs, were Papa Valcour and Anse, Feez La Blanc, Adolphe, and Victor, each puffing steady streams of perique smoke toward the fireplace.

The firelight illumined their faces, but left the rear of the room in shadows, except where, through a doorway, the yellow glow of an oil lamp lighted up the kitchen, where Maman was busy with her evening task of "reddin' up" the supper things.

Before the hearth were stretched the three or four hounds—Black, Brindle, and the tan pup—whose steaming hides attested to their recent advent from out-of-doors. Overhead the strings of dried garlic and red peppers, dependent from the rafters, were interspersed with the black corded rolls of recently-hung perique tobacco, while on the shelf over the fireplace were a number of glass jars, interspersed with cakes of golden yellow beeswax, that contained Maman's stock of sun-dried okra and sassafras leaves to flavor her dishes of gumbo and chicken *fillet*.

"Dose cattle driftin' bad ternite," observed Papa.

"Ya-as, dey bunch bad erlong de line fence en de bayou. Lots oh dose ole cows geet down en maik er beeg crop er hides ter gather cum three days," interjected Adolphe.

"*Ja donc*, eet vere bad. Dose cow dun go eenteh de wintah een bad shape."

"All dese fall, de rain he rot de grass, so dey hab no eatin' evah sence de La Bades fence up de maarsh en maik er rice fiel' of eet," remarked Feez.

"*Mais, oui!* Rice he good crop, but dat maarsh ben wintah pastah for de range stock evah sence Gret Gran'père La Blanc settle de prairie; das wuz long taim ergo. Now eet dun sole, an' stock haf teh rustle de uppah range. *Mauvais!* No won-dah we see *le loup blanc*."



"Ya-as, en de naixt t'ing yer knows, Papa, dah be sumbody a-hearin' *le loup-garou*. Dis de kine er night he do he trabels een. Me, I no want hear heem; mek me feel crawley up mah back."

"Das *loup blanc* 'nuff," added Anse.

"How dat, Anse?" questioned Adolphe. "Yeah no tell us 'bout dat."

"*Eau sacrée!* Eet wuz unpleasante." With a shrug of the shoulders, he resumed: "Me en Papa we start by starlight teh ride down teh de beeg draw after dat black yearlin' en old Spot's heifer dat dun strayed las' week. Jes' es eet cum day, w'en t'ings luk gray en kinder mixed en fuzzy, down by de lone mesquite dar wuz sumfin' w'ite er stan'in'. W'en we cum clus eet dun gone, but a minute later dar eet wuz ergin de moun's er leetle furder on. We start teh lope, en eet gone ergin. Den we seen eet on de leetle moun' neah de crawdad flat, des fah 'nuff off so we don't mek hout w'at 'tis. Den, jes' es eet cum full light, we heah er lobo call off teh ouah right, den er pack ansehed down to'a'd de maarsh, en den de w'ite t'ing cum down offen de moun' right to'a'd us. En we heahs de loudes,' longes' yelp er *loup* evah dun maik, en suah yer er-settin' dar, we see eet's er beeg w'ite lobo—beeg laik er yearlin', en eet jes' canterin' erlong. Papa ups he rifle en taiks er shot, but *loup* pays no 'tention; jes' lopes right pas', en een er minute, he dun gone. Me, ah ride hup hon de moun', but can't see nuttin'; but dat same long yelp dun come ergin fum way off yondah to'a'd de maarsh.

"'Bout sunup, des es we geets teh de *tremblantes*,<sup>1</sup> me, ah see sumfin' stan'in' by de beeg suck-hole en Papa he says, 'Ain't dat *le loup*?' Suah enuff, dar he ees, en me, ah try mah luck, but de bullet des splash de mud; no *loup* dah, but we heahs he howl ergin sumers erbout."

"Das vere bad. My papa he tells me," interjected Victor, "dat las' taim *le loup blanc* wuz erroun' mos' all de cattle die fum charbon fly,<sup>2</sup> en de people had *el vomito*<sup>3</sup> all das summah. *Le loup-garou* he howl all das wintah, too."

"Eh! *Nom de nom!* W'at wuz dat?"

<sup>1</sup>*Prairie tremblante*, shaking or trembling prairie, a marshy formation.

<sup>2</sup>*Charbon*, anthrax.

<sup>3</sup>*El vomito*, yellowjack, yellow fever.

At the instant a long, raucous cry came down the wind; harsh and discordant it struck the ear. Then silence fell. The hounds started growling from their slumbers, but as the prolonged sound struck again upon their wakened ears, their tails dropped, the bristles on their backs rose in evident terror, and with eyes gleaming in affright they sought refuge beneath the men's chairs, while the men, startled, gazed at each other inquiringly.

"*Nom de Dieu!* Das fus taime evah heah dat, me. What eet be?" gasped Adolphe, as Mamjan, white-faced, joined the group.

"Das honlee de black stud try break hout he pen, I reckon," ventured Anse. "Some dem ponee dey geet too clus teh de wall en he geet mad."

"Reccum so," agreed Papa with a deep breath of relief, "but eet soun' *mauvais* on sech er night. Das black stud plum locoed, en he mek er beeg racket w'en any udder pony geet neah heem. Sum dese days he goin' kill heself way das he try brek troo de wall. Me, ah don' know w'at we goan do with heem."

"Ya-as," resumed Anse after a pause, "we dun fine de black steer en de heifer down een de draw, but *le loup* dun hamstring her. De steer he some scratch hup, too, but we geet heem hoame. De odder, we geet her hide. Ya-as, we dun feex her good wid pizen. Dar be er plenty seeck *loup* round dare ter-night, ah reckon."

"*Très bien!* Das right; me, ah glad sumbody feex hem," remarked Victor. "Dey been so bad erroun' ouah place das we don't can lief anyt'ing houtside. Why, las' night my papa he geet very tiahed er de racket dose houn's keep hup er fightin', en he go hout by de corral, en as dey run pas' he keeck dem. Dey don't yelp 'tall, des snarl, en den de moon shine hout, en he see eet es beeg black *loup*—no houn' 'tall. Foah he kin shoot eet pass eenteh de shadow ob de calf shed, en den eet dun gone. Me, ah teh scairt go out deah ob nights. Dey dun stole all Mamjan's *dindes* en *poulets*<sup>4</sup> offen de bushes whar dey roosts."

"Das bad, Victor. Yeah hab teh geet ovah das er yeh nebber kin he'p run de *loup blanc*. Eet tek er fellah wid some san' in he crawl. Dey say das *le loup-garou* ees one ob de agents *le*

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<sup>4</sup>Turkeys and chickens.

*diable*, eef not *monsieur* hese'f. Me, ah t'ink *le loup blanc* hees seester or bruder; he ack das way."

"Papa tole us 'bout de taime yeh runned de white wolf 'cross *prairies tremblantes*, erlong wid Gran'père."

"Das long taime ago now. Me, ah wuz jus' growed up. Eet been er pretty fair wintah, no cole weddah, en de spring he rainy en foggy. Eet erlong 'bout de end ob calfin' taime, en ah wuz er helpin' wuk de cattle en brand.

"Das only two house on Long Prairie den, Gran'père Valcour en Gran'père Anse. Anse des on de aidge er de *tremblantes*. Bofe haf putty good bunch stock; but deh lose lots er calf en colts dat spring. *Le loup* vere bad en we haf no good houn's den teh run dem wid. Dey slow en no good fighters. *Le loup* whup dem easy, mostly keel dem.

"Das mornin' me en Gran'père start teh ride down teh Gran'père Anse's teh he'p heem cut hout some calf, en es we pass Oak Motte, ware de school en chu'ch house ees now, we jump er *loup blanc*. Er course, we tuk afteh heem, en he circle up to'a'd de ridge, den change he min' en light out foah de *tremblantes*. We haf no dorg erlong; so has teh ride putty fas', but he des lopes erlong. W'en we geet een sight er Anse's, me, ah tek er couple er shots et heem wid my gun. Don't heet heem, but keeck up de dus' kin' er clus, en das mek he hump hese'f er leetle.

"Dey hear de shots en cum lopin' out, Gran'père en Alex, en dey kin'er turn heem. Den we on de *tremblantes* en cain't mek so good taime, caze pony maybe brek through en geet bogged hup. Gran'père en Alex tek er swing teh de right so es teh head heem off, foh he geet teh de beeg suck-hole. Me, ah ridin' er putty good Steeldust pony dat outrun my papa's, en ah keep putty good sight er *le loup*—he not real w'ite, kin'er dirty gray en mighty beeg! W'en we geet near he suck-hole, de whole prairie wuz des er weavin' en er rollin' laik de waves er de sea. Alex, he ride up on de fur side en *le loup* des kin'er stop er minute, en Steeldust let out er notch en ah geet putty clus. Den he tu'n baick en try pass me, clus teh de watah, en ah swing roun' en try crowd heem baick.

"Ah dun eet, but can't stop de pony; des haf taime teh jump cl'ar, when he squats en de groun' slips erway fum he hoof en kerchunk! eenteh de suck-hole he go--clean outah sight. Me, ah slide, teh, an' ah scratch en claw de groun' hard; my

legs slip obah de aidge unteh de mud, en ah kin'er balance dar. Me, ah deeg my fingers eentah de dirt, en try crawl hout, but das mud gotter grip, en ah feel myse'f begin teh slip, slip, easy, deeper een. Eet des seem teh crope up erroun' my legs laik de watah bubbles hup fum a spring; but eet suck laik er steam engine, en me, ah yell laik mad en claw dirt en scrapple laik de vere debbil. *Ja donc!* Eet do no good. De mud he crawl hup teh my knee, den my hip, en ah t'ink eet's all hup wid me. Ah fetch ernuther yell en try pull hout ergin, but de ole grass short en rotten, en de roots cum out w'en I claw dem. Den de groun' begin teh rockin' en ah slip faster; den ah heah er yell, en sumfin' hit me on de shoulder, en ah throwed hup my arm an' feel er rope. *Mon Dieu!* but ah grab eet queeck. Den ah heah Alex yell, 'Raise yeah hed; put hit under yer arms. *Vite! Vite!*'

"Es ah did, eet drawed tight en ah knowed dat he goan try snub me hout. Ah t'ink eet cut me in two—me—feh eet squeeze my breff hout, en de mud he drag, dra-ag my laigs laik eet nevah let go. En ah t'ink how sometimes ah stretch er ole cow's naik w'en she dun bog en ah try pull her hout by de horn. Den ah keeck en scrapple some moah, en all at oncet, wid er slosh en er gurgle, eet let go; en ah slid hout hon de grass en bresh, des as ah heah de call er *le loup*, long en wailin' en way off. Naixt t'ing, me, ah lookin' hup at de sun, en Alex en Gran'père en my papa er rubbin' en er punchin' me. Ah feel putty seeck en gone w'en ah set hup en luk et dat suck-hole er little piece away er bubblin' en er wu'kin'.

"*'Mon fils*, das er clus call. *Le Bon Dieu* vere kin' teh me dis day,' sehs Papa. 'We bettah be er gettin' hoame.' So ah clime hup behin' heem en ride.

"Steeldust? He dun gone; nebbah show hup atteh he go een hole. En my new saddle, eet los', too, en de hair rope dat Injun Pierre dun twis' foh me. *Mauvais!* but eet wuz er bad luck day feh me.

"Alex, he says he putty clus teh *le loup*, en des 'bout snap he rope ovah hes haid w'en he heah me yell. He turn he haid queeck, en see me een de aidge er de hole. He whirl he pony en cum *vite* en snap de rope ovah my shoulder en snub me hout. He seh he t'ink I bruk in two de mud hang on teh my legs so. *Le loup?* He nevah luk atteh, but he hearn heem yell too, des ah cum hout.



"We don't luk feh heem no moah, no seh. En me, an don't hunt no *loup* feh er long taim. En ef ah see one dat loked w'itish, ah don't run heem 'tall; no seh.

"*Ja donc!* Das de cheekin crowin' feh gettin' teh baid. Dah'll be sum ridin' teh do tomorrow w'en we go turn dem ole cow back teh de range en geet dose hides. So *vite, vite!*"

## PIONEER FOLK TALES

BY MARY JOURDAN ATKINSON AND J. FRANK DOBIE

The average household of the pioneer Texas settler had a repertoire of tales reflective of the soil, climate, and other features of his environment. They were generally told in such a way that the children of the family accepted them as true relations of experiences in the lives of their forebears. As a matter of fact, many descendants of the earlier pioneers are yet telling some of the tales in the same way.

One class of these early day folk narratives—a class now rapidly disappearing as a result of luxuries—was designed to teach the children manners—a purpose that has inspired children's stories from time immemorial. Besides educating their offspring in the ways of general courtesy, the pioneer parents, particularly of the better class of settlers, felt it necessary to inform them concerning the elegancies of civilization that had been left behind. Naturally the burden of this instruction was borne by the mother. The settlements became "alive" with stories ridiculing the backwoodsman and enforcing the rules of etiquette.

Of such a nature were two yarns that concern "yaller bread" and "flour biscuits." Both of these yarns have as a basis the scarcity of wheat products in the newly settled areas of Texas, and both were early told to the first named writer of this article by her mother as a part of the history of the family, as she no doubt believed them to be, since they were told to her as a child by elders who vouchsafed their authenticity.

The "yaller bread" incident preluded an "infare" dinner that was being prepared for a newly wedded couple. The table was set but the company was not due to arrive for an hour or so when the ladies of the house found their hospitality required by an unexpected guest. He was a man living some miles "up the creek" who had obligingly stopped on his way home from the mill below to deliver a supply of freshly ground cornmeal. He was a person of considerable ignorance and of little consequence, and his presence was not desired at the

wedding dinner; nevertheless, custom demanded that he leave the house with his appetite satisfied and his feelings uninjured. It was decided to say nothing of the impending sociable, and the hostess graciously suggested that he sit down and eat immediately so that he should not be delayed on his long ride home. The man sat down at his ease and began eating. In fact, he made so free with the good things on the table that he was obliged to let his belt out notch by notch until finally he got up and took it off. He hung it on the back of his chair and forgot to put it on again when the meal was over. But that omission was not the worst of his backwoods violations of good manners.

As he ate on, he seemed to relish in particular a huge plate of sliced pound cake. He kept spreading the pieces thick with butter and making away with them, while he ate chicken, beef, venison, and other solid food, until the hostess, alarmed at the rate at which her cherished and rare cake was disappearing, pressed him to take some biscuits. With white flour at a premium, biscuits, as well as cake, were a delicacy, a luxury; cornbread was the staple breadstuff. Surely, thought the hostess, the biscuits will divert him from the pound cake.

But the backwoodsman, apparently with perfect sincerity, waved them away. "No thank you, ma'am," he said. "You just save them there biscuits. This here yaller bread is good enough for me."

The "flour biscuit" yarn has to do with a small boy, his grown-up sister, and a guest who may be either the minister or another grown-up sister's beau. The guest was with the family at the dining table; the boy was "waiting"—waiting, that is, to eat at the second table after the grown-ups were through; Mary Ann, one of the big sisters, was in charge of the kitchen. Hot flour biscuits were making of the meal a regular feast. When the plate was emptied, which was in an incredibly short time, the boy "happened" to be in the dining room.

"Come here, Johnny," said his mother. "Take this plate and go ask Mary Ann for another helping of biscuits."

"Mary Ann," he squalled out as he entered the kitchen—not through a swinging door, "gimme some more biscuits."

But Mary Ann, thinking that Johnny wanted "flour bread"

for his own consumption and fearing that the supply might run short, shook her head. She did not want to speak aloud her reasons for refusal.

The boy returned to the dining room empty handed. Again his mother motioned him to her side and commanded him to go into the kitchen for more biscuits.

Once more he entered the kitchen and bawled out, "Mary Ann, gimme some more biscuits, I say."

Still believing that he was teasing for biscuits on his own account, for surely, she thought, the people at the table could not have eaten up all the biscuits on it so soon, and still hoping to keep from putting her refusal and her reasons into audible speech, Mary Ann this time gave the boy a vigorous shove toward the door, accompanied by a vigorous pinch on the arm. So for a second time Johnny returned to the dining room without having accomplished his errand.

"Johnny," demanded his mother, with reckoning in her tones, "didn't you hear me tell you to bring some more biscuits?"

And Johnny, backing away from her, replied, "I ain't a-goin' in that kitchen no more and have Mary Ann a-pinchin' me."

Several rules of conduct might be enforced by such a tale.

A story of a somewhat similar nature has to do with the first appearance of a woven rug in a given locality. A boy was sent by his parents to the home of some new and well-to-do neighbors. He had been used to deer skins and bull hides for carpets, and when he was invited into the elegantly furnished parlor of his hosts, he was very much intimidated. By sidling around the edge of the floor, he managed to get to a chair without walking on a rug that covered most of the floor space. When he left a few moments later he got out of the room by the same circuitous route.

"Well, son, how did you like our new neighbors?" his mother inquired when he got back home.

"Oh," the boy replied, "the lady seemed to be mighty nice, but she is terrible carless like. Why, she had a fine piece of cloth spread right out in the middle of the floor, and danged if she didn't put her foot right down on it. But I knowed better than to do anything like that and so managed to hop around and keep from steppin' on it."



A third story in which a small boy figures, but which seems to be directed only incidentally against ignorance, comes from the piney woods of East Texas. It sounds like an old English folk-tale and has certainly been very widespread. A youngster of eight or ten years had been left "to watch the pot boil" while his mother paid a visit to the nearest neighbor. After the mother had been with her friend a while, dipping snuff and gossiping, she observed her son making gesticulations outside the door. He was beckoning her to come home, but she shook her head in refusal, at the same time motioning him to go away. The boy went through a series of antics with his head, apparently butting it against an imaginary object, and insisting in pantomime that she cut her visit short. The annoyed mother persisted, however, in refusing to cut her visit short. At the same time she went on motioning him to return to his post of duty.

At last the boy, who stammered badly, blurted out: "Wo-wu-well, yu-yu-you bu-bu-better come home, jus' like I tell you. That there ram's head is bu-buttin' them there cabbage heads out of the pot."

Perhaps he was the same little boy who originated the saying, "Ram, lamb, sheep meat, and mutton, better come home with me. We're going to have four kinds of meat for dinner."

More than one Texas youngster who pouted at the food set before him was met with the parental injunction to "help yourself to the mustard." The injunction was derived from a tale common enough in stage coach days. As the tale went, a traveler from the East alighted from the stage one day to get dinner at some remote stand. He was confronted by the rough and ready fare of Mexican *frijoles* boiled with "sow belly," a pone of cold bread, and, to one side, a pot of mustard. The Easterner shoved the dish of *frijoles* and salt pork aside with something like contempt and did not even look at the bread. "I want something to eat," he announced.

"Well, just help yourself to the mustard," the stage driver cordially replied, and the phrase became a byword of the ranges.

The story has been variously told in print. Carl Raht (*The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country*, El Paso, 1919, p. 222) tells it thus:

"One night the stage driver to Barrilla Springs had two very fastidious passengers coming from El Paso, on their way back to civilization. They were exceedingly irritable from their journey across the country. That they did not love the stage coach or the country was evident from the many complaints they hurled, ever and anon, at the driver's head.

"Finally, they requested the driver to awaken them for breakfast, and went to sleep. They arrived at Barrilla station at two o'clock in the morning.

"'Breakfast,' shouted the driver, shaking and kicking them. The men tumbled out, stiff and sore from their long journey, and went grumbling into the stage stand quarters. . . . Inside the stage stand a tender brought out a pan of beans, dry, not very well cooked, and rattling in the pan.

"'I can't eat beans,' said one of the men in disgust. 'I am a victim of dyspepsia. I just can't eat them.'

"The cook then served them with bacon, fat and juicy, which he slammed down before his guests indifferently.

"'Bacon!' exclaimed the other passenger. 'Why, whoever heard of one eating bacon so early in the morning? It doesn't agree with me this early.'

"'Well!' retorted the driver, snatching up a bottle from the shelf, 'here's some French mustard—eat that, damn you!'

Really, the story might well be included in a chapter on the folk-lore of stage drivers, which someone should write. It can hardly be understood without an appreciation of what many of the stage stands were like. Frank Root, in that excellent and now almost unprocurable book, *The Overland Stage to California*, gives some illuminating facts and also another version of the mustard story.<sup>1</sup>

"At one of the stations . . . in southern Nebraska," he says, "where we stopped one night for supper in . . . 1863, the men about the premises had been butchering hogs that afternoon. Soon after supper I was invited by one of the stage boys into the back room to see . . . the hogs that had been killed and split open. . . . I was not a little surprised, and at the same time amused, to find a half-dozen or more hens quietly resting on the sides of the porkers. Whether there were other hens about the premises roosting on the

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<sup>1</sup>Root, Frank A., and Connelley, William E., *The Overland Stage to California*, Topeka, 1901, pp. 91, 94–97.

meal barrel I did not take the time to determine, presuming that the good-natured ranchman, proprietor of the station, had obeyed the injunction of the traditional Hoosier farmer, who, the last thing before going to bed, invariably gave explicit orders to have the 'backs of all the chickens turned to the wall.' . . .

"Fried bacon and ham were a regular standby at most of the stations on the upper Little Blue and the Platte. . . . Some of the stations were indescribably filthy, even for an overland station far out on the frontier . . . One passenger, who evidently had not roughed it much on the plains, sat down at the table with a half dozen others, and at once commenced . . . complaining that there was a good deal of dirt, etc. The landlord, who at the time happened to be standing behind him, at once spoke up:

"'Well, sir, I was taught long ago that we must all eat a peck of dirt.'

"'I am aware of that fact, my dear sir,' hastily responded the passenger, 'but I don't like to eat mine all at once.'

". . . A great many of the stock tenders out on the frontier who lived between 'home' stations kept 'bachelor's hall' and lived by themselves. At one of the stations on the eastern slope of the Rockies northwest of Latham was one; and at the hour for dinner one day in the summer of 1864 a weary pilgrim from the East, making his way overland, chanced to stop for a drink of water and some rest. He was invited by the host to dine. 'I don't care if I do,' quickly responded the anxious footman, and he took a seat at the table. The host cut off a slice of fat pork and the guest was asked to pass his plate.

"'Thank you,' said he, 'but I never eat it.'

"'Very well,' said the host, 'just help yourself to the mustard.' And the host proceeded with his meal.

"It happened that fat pork and mustard comprised the entire list of edibles then in the stock tender's house; and he offered the guest the best he had. For a long time it was a regular standing joke of the stage boys along the line, when anyone refused anything at the table, to say, 'Help yourself to the mustard.'"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Can it be possible that one of the "help yourself to the mustard" stage line characters was Sam Brown?

"Every one," says C. H. Shinn, in *The Story of the Mine*, New York, 1896, pages 66-67, "has heard of the 'Tombstone Terror' and the 'Bad Man from Bodie.' The type has gradually become semi-humorous. Not so in the old Comstock days of 'Big Chiefs,' the most of whom were plain and prosaic scoundrels too long unhung. One, Sam Brown—heavy-voiced, burly, insolent—had killed thirteen men in Texas and

The saying can still be heard in bachelor camps and elsewhere in Texas and to the west.

The eccentricities of the Texas weather, which have given rise to such sayings as "All signs fail in Texas," and "Only the fool and the stranger prophesy weather in Texas," inspired various stories that the Texas folk still cherish. A representative one is this:

One fine, rather warm day a man was riding across the prairie country of south Texas. He rode slowly, for his horse was sweating hard under the bright sun. Casting a glance backwards towards the north, the rider noted on the horizon the low-hanging blue cloud that accompanies a "blue," or wet, norther. (The "blue" norther is to be distinguished from the dry, or "whizz-arrow-ing," variety.) Immediately he put spurs to his horse, hoping to outrun the rain and the freezing wind. The horse ran his best, but the wind was swifter than he—swifter than the hind part of him, at least. As he plunged through the stable door into shelter, his tail and haunches were wet and frozen, while his steaming chest was at a fever heat. The horse died of penumonia.<sup>3</sup>

Texas mud, like Texas weather, became the subject of homely folk tales, always of a humorous cast. A certain story has been applied to mud of all colors and consistencies in the State of Texas, and probably to the mud of other states, the point of the story being directed, perhaps, more at the highway through the mud than at the mud itself. One time a stranger, so the tale runs, was riding along a road in the vicinity of (whatever town the speaker wants to poke fun at)—or down the street of ———, when he saw a hat on the ground. He had started to pick it up, when a voice shouted from the subterranean depths, "Hi there, leave my hat alone!"

"Why," the astonished stranger exclaimed, "is someone actually under the hat?"

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California before he reached Washoe. He kept a station on the Humboldt for a time, and once when a traveler desired something to eat, Brown pointed to a piece of bacon. The traveler, having no knife, asked for one. Brown pulled out an immense bowie, then thrust it forward with the remark that he 'had already killed five men with that knife,' and the startled visitor fled in haste."

<sup>3</sup>This yarn should be compared with the story of Mr. Fishback's ride, in "Fishback Yarns from the Sulphurs," by J. M. Deaver, this volume.



"Yes," returned the subterranean voice, slightly stifled, "and that ain't all. I'm standing on my mule."<sup>4</sup>

The pioneering settlers of America have always been land hungry. Illustrative of this hunger is the old story of the Texas pioneer who, having secured a deed to his "league and labor" of land, began, before he got it well improved, to trade and swap for more land and yet more land until he was accused by his neighbors of wanting all the land in the world. "Oh, no," said he, "nothing like that a-tall! All the land I want is just what belongs to me and my boys and everything that's jinin' it."

Most of the foregoing folk yarns and others of their kind are effective only when told in dialect with the characteristic drawl. How much depends on the accent and pronunciation is illustrated by a little story that used to be told supremely well by the late Mrs. L. N. Throop, of Austin. She had it from the natives of Grimes County, which is bounded on the east by the Navasota River.

Now, the old Texan way of pronouncing *Navasota* was something like Nav-a-sot, with just the suggestion of an *r* after the first syllable. One day some land surveyors stopped at a settler's cabin built on the *Navasot* River. As the story must go, the river did not have a name at that time. After dinner, while the surveyors were picking their teeth on the front gallery, one of them remarked upon what a fine brood of chickens a hen scratching about in the front yard had.

"You must have had mighty good luck when you set that hen," the surveyor said.

"Nev'r sot her a-tall, stranger," the settler replied. "She sot herself out in the woods there, and one day she just come up with that covey of chickens."

Whether *Navasota* is an Indian name or a name merely derived from a frontiersman's phrase that a surveyor happened to hear and then applied to a stream close by, is not likely to worry either philologist or historian.

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<sup>4</sup>This story used to be told to us children by my father in a somewhat dramatic manner. He would imitate with his voice the smothered, strangling man on the mule down under the mud; then he would imitate the surprised stranger.—J.F.D.

The tales, like the dialect, the sayings and the songs of the pioneer folk, are passing from the memory of man. It is to be hoped that before they are entirely forgotten they will go "where de good stories go"—into print, there to be preserved for all time.

## THE CORN THIEF—A FOLK ANECDOTE

BY JOHN R. CRADDOCK

At least a dozen old hayseeds have imparted to me the following tale as a part of their personal history. Only a year or so ago one of our renters in Dickens County told it in the following words:

"When I was a boy my daddy had a log barn. He noticed that somebody was regular swiping corn through a chink in the logs. So one evening he sets a steel trap jest inside the chink.

"Well, early next morning when he goes down to the crib to feed and milk, he notices a neighbor standing on his tip-toes right beside the chink and his hand inside. But he don't pay him any particular mind. Jest says, 'Mawnin', neighbor,' and goes on doing the milking. The neighbor sorter shifts toes and mumbles something and keeps on standing there. After a while, though, he can't stand it any longer, or makes up his mind, or something, and begins to beg for mercy.

"Well, Dad goes inside and opens up the trap and the neighbor goes away. And, by gosh, do you know, we never did miss nary 'nuther year of corn."

# THE TEXAS PECAN; THE MAN IN THE MOON

BY G. T. BLUDWORTH

## I

This little tale came to me from John Lee Smith, of Throckmorton County. It was told to him by a Kiowa Indian with whom he served in the World War.

Long, long ago the great White Father of the Kiowa Indians, whose home was on the Plains of Texas, lived in their midst, directing them in their war councils, leading them in battles against the enemy, and accompanying them on their hunts. He was their personal leader. But the time came when he must leave. He must go to the spirit land, he said. However, he promised to continue to guide his people, through the medicine men, and to return to them when his mission in the spirit world was accomplished. He went away.

But he had no sooner entered the spirit world than the Evil One, who had been watching and hating him for many years, attacked him. In the combat that followed, the cohorts of the Evil Spirit and the cohorts of the Good Spirit fought until the whole upper world became an inferno of lightning and thunder. In the end the White Father was killed. His lifeless body fell to the earth that the Kiowas hunted over. They saw and recognized his form. They buried it in the bed of a stream, carefully covering the grave with rock and gravel.

The place of the burial became a shrine for periodical visits. One time when some red men came to do homage at it they saw that a green stem had pushed its way up out of the rock. They took this green thing as a good sign. As it grew year after year, they saw that it was a new kind of tree in their world. At last, after so many years had gone by that only the old men could remember the burial of their White Father, the Indians found some nuts fallen from the great tree that had sprouted out of the grave. They found the meat in these nuts delicious and the nuts excellent for carrying on long hunting expeditions. Other trees came from nuts scattered on the ground and after many, many years the nut-bearing trees



were growing all along the streams of Texas. They called the tree *pecan*, which means *nut*.

## II

Everybody has seen the man in the moon burning brush. But how did he get there?

In the timbered parts of East Texas, farmers used to clear their ground by grubbing up the underbrush and girdling the trees to kill them. In time the trees began to decay, and then there was dead wood to clear off. During the winter months the farmers piled the fallen wood around the dead trees and built fires. Sometimes a farmer did not knock off on Saturday, but piled and burned brush on Sunday.

Well, once upon a time, as a story told among the rural people of East Texas goes, one of these Sabbath-breaking farmers was translated from his earthly fire to the moon and as a punishment was there put to burning brush forever. It is sometimes added that the woman in the moon was placed there to increase the torment of the man.

## FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD

BY H. B. PARKS

The following story is a compilation of three incidents and an attempt to explain them. A number of years ago while a resident of Alaska I became much interested in folk-lore and consequently anything of this nature came to attract my attention quickly. I was a resident of Hot Springs, North Carolina, during the year of 1912 and had charge of the agricultural work of a large industrial school. This school owned a considerable herd of cattle, which were kept in the meadows on the tops of the Big Rich Mountains on the boundary between North Carolina and Tennessee. One day while riding through the mountains looking after this stock, I heard the following stanza sung by a little negro boy, who was picking up dry sticks of wood near a negro cabin:

Foller the drinkin' gou'd,  
Foller the drinkin' gou'd;  
No one know, the wise man say,  
"Foller the drinkin' gou'd."

It is very doubtful if this part of the song would have attracted anyone's attention had not the old grandfather, who had been sitting on a block of wood in front of the cabin, slowly got up and, taking his cane, given the boy a sound lick across the back with the admonition not to sing that song again. This excited my curiosity and I asked the old man why he did not want the boy to sing the song. The only answer I could get was that it was bad luck.

About a year later I was in the city of Louisville and, having considerable time to wait for a train, I went walking about the city. My journey brought me to the river front, and while standing there watching the wharf activities I was very much surprised to hear a negro fisherman, who was seated on the edge of the wharf, singing the same stanza on the same tune. The fisherman sang the same stanza over and over again without any variation. While I am unable to write the music that goes with this stanza, I can say that it is a jerky chant with the accented syllables very much prolonged.<sup>1</sup> When

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<sup>1</sup>In a fortunate hour I have met Mr. Carl A. Fehr, of Austin, and he has kindly transcribed the music from the best singing I could produce.

I asked the fisherman what he knew about the song, he replied that he knew nothing about it; he would not even converse with me. This seemed to be very peculiar, but because of the story of bad luck told by the grandfather in North Carolina I did not question the negro further.

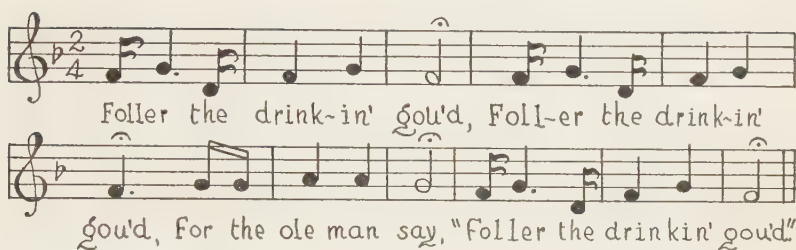
In 1918 I was standing on the platform of the depot at Waller, Texas, waiting for a train, when, much to my surprise, I heard the familiar tune being picked on a violin and banjo and two voices singing the following words:

Foller the Risen Lawd,  
Foller the Risen Lawd;  
The bes' thing the Wise Man say,  
"Foller the Risen Lawd."

The singers proved to be two Negro boys about sixteen years of age. When they were asked as to where they learned the song, they gave the following explanation. They said that they were musicians traveling with a colored revivalist and that he had composed this song and that they played it and used it in their revival meetings. They also said the revivalist wrote new stanzas to fit the meetings.

These three incidents led me to inquire into the subject, and I was very fortunate in meeting an old Negro at College Station, Texas, who had known a great many slaves in his boyhood days. After I had gained his confidence, this man told the following story and gave the following verses of the song.

He said that just before the Civil War, somewhere in the South, he was not just sure where, there came a sailor who had lost one leg and had the missing member replaced by a peg-leg. He would appear very suddenly at some plantation and ask for work as a painter or carpenter. This he was able to get at almost every place. He made friends with the slaves and soon all of the young colored men were singing the song that is herein mentioned. The peg-leg sailor would stay for a week or two at a place and then disappear. The following spring nearly all the young men among the slaves disappeared and made their way to the north and finally to Canada by following a trail that had been made by the peg-leg sailor and was held in memory by the Negroes in this peculiar song.



- 1 When the sun come back,  
 When the firs' quail call,  
 Then the time is come  
 Foller the drinkin' gou'd.

*Chorus:* Foller the drinkin' gou'd,  
 Foller the drinkin' gou'd;  
 For the ole man say,  
 "Foller the drinkin' gou'd."

- 2 The riva's bank am a very good road,  
 The dead trees show the way,  
 Lef' foot, peg foot goin' on,  
 Foller the drinkin' gou'd.

*Chorus:*

- 3 The riva ends a-tween two hills,  
 Foller the drinkin' gou'd;  
 'Nuther riva on the other side  
 Follers the drinkin' gou'd.

*Chorus:*

- 4 Wha the little riva  
 Meet the grea' big un,  
 The ole man waits—  
 Foller the drinkin' gou'd.

Now my birthplace is in the North and I also belong to a family that took considerable part in the underground railroad movement; so I wrote about this story to the older members of the family in the North. One of my great-uncles, who was connected with the railroad movement, remembered that in the records of the Anti-Slavery Society there was a story of a



peg-legged sailor, known as Peg Leg Joe, who made a number of trips through the South and induced young Negroes to run away and escape through the North to Canada. The main scene of his activities was in the country immediately north of Mobile, and the trail described in the song followed northward to the head waters of the Tombigbee River, thence over the divide and down the Tennessee River to the Ohio. It seems that the peg-legged sailor would go through the country north of Mobile and teach this song to the young slaves and show them a mark of his natural left foot and the round spot made by the peg-leg. He would then go ahead of them northward and on every dead tree or other conspicuous object he would leave a print made with charcoal or mud of the outline of a human left foot and a round spot in place of the right foot. As nearly as could be found out the last trip was made in 1859. Nothing more could be found relative to this man.

The Negro at College Station said that the song had many verses which he could not remember. He quoted a number which, either by fault of memory or secret meaning, are unintelligible and are omitted. The ones given are in the phonetic form used by the College Station Negro and become rather simple when one is told that the "drinkin' gou'd" is the Great Dipper, that the "wise man" was the peg-leg sailor, and that the admonition is to go ever north, following the trail of the left foot and the peg-leg until "the grea' big un" (the Ohio) is reached, where the runaways would be met by the old sailor.

The revivalist realized the power of this sing-song and made it serve his purpose by changing a few words, and in so doing pointed his followers to a far different liberty than the one the peg-leg sailor advocated.

## SOME NEGRO FOLK-SONGS OF TEXAS

BY MARY VIRGINIA BALES

To discover among Negro folk-songs which are of Negro origin and which have been appropriated is most difficult. There has been much borrowing from the white people by the Negro, and the white people have in turn borrowed back their own material. Each transition alters the song and makes more complicated the question of its origin. For the purposes of this collection I have accepted as Negro folk-songs those songs that are now sung almost entirely by the Negroes and that seem to present the Negro point of view.

Most of the indigenous songs seem to have had a communal origin. I have frequently asked Negroes how certain religious songs were composed, and always I have received some such answer as this: "De Lord jes' put hit en our mouf. We is ignorant, and de Lord puts ebry word we says en our mouf."<sup>1</sup> The truth of the matter is that the leader of a congregation begins with any Biblical phrase that pleases him, or with some familiar line of Scripture, and then the group joins in on the refrain; some person in the gathering adds a timely word or two; a new line is pieced together. This line is sung over and over until another impulse comes. The "shouts," which Allen has described so realistically in his Introduction<sup>2</sup> as a remnant of the barbaric dance, are another source of inspiration.

Even when some negro clever at rhymes composes a spiritual or a ballet for a particular occasion, the song is unmarked by his individuality. According to Krehbiel, the creator of folk-song is an "individualized representative" of his people. He takes his idiom from the speech of the people, his subject from their happiness or woe. When his song has gone out into the world, the creator's identity is swallowed

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<sup>1</sup>One Negro, of Hearne, Texas, who made this assertion was 107 years old, according to her own statement. She was a slave and is the grandmother of Eva Miles, who gave me one of my best songs.

<sup>2</sup>Allen, W. F., and others, *Slave Songs of the United States*, New York, 1867.

up in that of the people. The song enters upon a series of transformations which "adapt it to varying circumstances of the time and place without loss of vital loveliness."<sup>3</sup> Thus, no matter what the manner of composition, the folk-song is a product of environment, a reflection of racial characteristics.

In order to make an orderly arrangement of the songs it is necessary to group them. All classifications have to be more or less superficial and overlap, but arrangement according to subject matter seems to be most logical. Yet how is one to place the following?

Away down yondah, on Cedar Creek,  
De niggers sleep till ha'f pas' seben,  
Dere heels stickin' out so far behin' de house  
Chickens roost on dem all de time.

*Chorus:* Tell me who built de Ark, Noah, Noah,  
Tell me who built de Ark?  
Brudder Noah built it,  
Brudder Noah built de Ark.

Although the song has a religious chorus, there is no religious spirit whatsoever in the song itself. The incongruous chorus of the workaday religious song, "Who Built de Ark?"<sup>4</sup> has, for want of an appropriate chorus, been tacked on. When the songs have not fallen into any logical group, I have arranged them according to their moods and uses.

I wish to express here my gratitude to Doris Shaw and Francis Allen for having transcribed the music to some of the songs.

## I. SPIRITUALS

The religious folk-songs of the Negro, because of the early recognition of their intrinsic worth, are perhaps the best known. They have been comparatively well collected and are as well preserved as any everchanging folk-music. It is no marvel that this group of songs was recognized, for the greater

<sup>3</sup>Krehbiel, H. E., *Afro-American Folk-Song*, New York, 1925.

<sup>4</sup>Odum, H. W., and Johnson, Guy B., *Negro Workaday Songs*, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1926, p. 191; Scarborough, Dorothy, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Cambridge, 1925, under the title of "Noah," p. 223.—B.M.D.

part of the songs of this class are haunting in their naïve pathos. They make one feel that here is real emotion, that here the Negro has reached the peak of his musical and poetical expression.

Probably another reason that the spirituals are so well preserved is that most of the Negroes refuse to sing any other kind of song to the collector. Those of the colored race who accept religion, accept it so fervently that it excludes all other interest from their lives. Mr. John Lomax told me of an incident that happened to him while he was collecting songs in the Brazos bottoms. He asked a Negro to sing him "The Boll Weevil," and the Negro said, "I'se sorry, Boss, but you gonna hab to ask dat wor'ly nigger ober yondah to sing you dat." I also found that the religious song is the only kind volunteered; and many times, before I could persuade a Negro to sing a spiritual, I had to furnish my whole religious history as a proof of my sincerity.

The songs of this group fall naturally into two classes: (1) those songs which treat of the Bible and personal religious experiences or are denominational songs; and (2) those songs which have religious refrains but are more moral than religious in tone.

These spirituals travel from one community to another, carried by the "leaders," and as there are no set forms for the songs, the different groups sing them in their own manner. In this way the variants of the songs arise. The songs not only spread throughout communities, but they slowly travel to different states. Naturally, this traveling brings about changes so marked that some of the versions resemble each other only in a line or two or in the chorus. This migration also serves to conceal the locality of the origins of the songs. The songs of this collection are Texas songs in that they are all sung in various parts of the state.

#### ALL I WANTS IS DAT TRUE RELIGION

The Negro has draped all his moods from the gayest to the most tragic with the veil of religion; and through this veil some of the songs show a dramatic story. Take for example the following song, which was given me by a pupil of the Fort Worth colored high school. If it were not for the



refrains, the song might well be called a simple narrative ballad.

- 1 Come on, Death, why is you so slow?  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!  
Jesus is waitin', an' I'm ready to go.  
All I want is dat true religion,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 2 De doctah come in an' wus lookin' sad,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!  
"Dis is de hardes' case I eber had."  
All I want is dat true religion,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 3 De doctah turn an' went out de do',  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!  
"Doan think I eber come here no mo'."  
All I want is dat true religion,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 4 Mudder an' fadder stan' 'roun' a-cryin',  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!  
"O, Lord, my po' chile a-dyin'!"  
All I want is dat true religion,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 5 Come on, sistah, an' give me a han',  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!  
I'm goin' to rock study to dat promise lan'.  
All I want is dat true religion,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 6 When I get to heaben I got nothin' to do,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!  
But to sit right down an' sing hallelu'.  
All I want is dat true religion,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

#### I WANNA BE IN DAT NUMBAH

This song is a favorite with the Negro Baptist church at Hearne, Texas. The pastor claims that the song has been sung in the Baptist congregation since slavery days. The song has such a sweep of rhythm to it that one can hardly keep from swaying to the music and joining in with the lusty-voiced singers. It is probably of group origin, since the verses are made up of repetitions of one line.

- 1 When de saints ob Gob shall lib,  
When de saints ob God shall lib,  
When de saints ob God shall lib,  
Good Lord, I wanna be in dat numbah!
- 2 When dey march a-roun' de throne,  
When dey march a-roun' de throne,  
When dey march a-roun' de throne,  
Good Lord, I wanna be in dat numbah!
- 3 When de saints go marchin' in,  
When de saints go marchin' in,  
When de saints go marchin' in,  
Good Lord, I wanna be in dat numbah!

The songs that show more complicated verse structure and more variation of theme are built upon the "call and response" plan. The "leader" calls out the leading verse, and the group answers with a refrain. The "leader," who goes from one community to another, has to be a man of some talent for singing and verse making, as well as a man who can rise to the demands of a hundred different occasions. He must have some sense of appropriateness and considerable ingenuity to aid his good memory. There are still a few of these men in Texas, but they are the product of community churches, not of dignified churches in towns and cities. M. B. Butler, of Hearne, is one Negro I am thinking of. He is known as "Blind Butler" by a third of the Negroes of the state. He is a preacher but is more famous as a song leader.

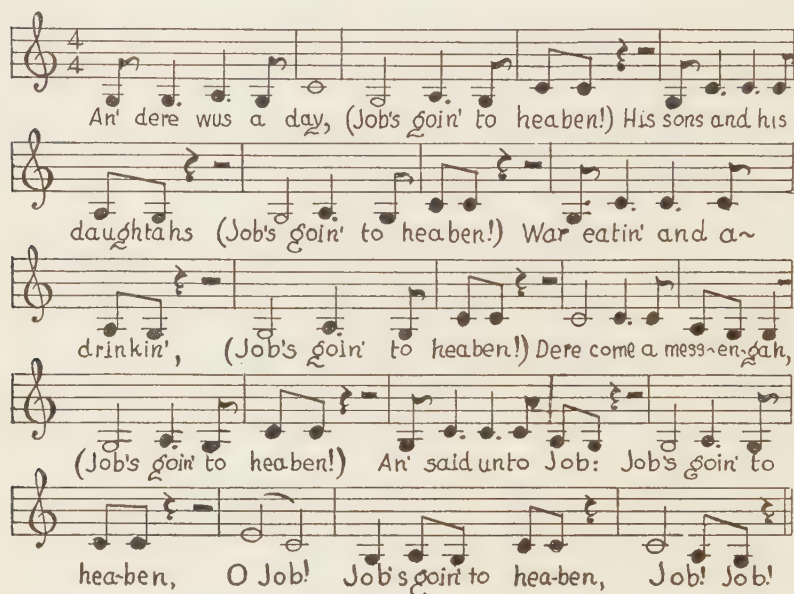
From every source, we learn that this "call and response" custom came from Africa, and therefore is not original with the American Negro. "A study of the spirituals leads to the belief that the earlier ones were built upon the form so common to African songs, leading lines and response. It would be safe to say that the bulk of spirituals are cast in this simple form."<sup>5</sup> So states James Weldon Johnson, an authority upon the spirituals of his race. The following song illustrates this oldest type of spiritual.

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<sup>5</sup>Johnson, J. W., *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, New York. 1926, p. 25.

## JOB'S GOIN' TO HEABEN

Emma Johnson, a Negro woman of Beaumont, told me that she learned "Job's Goin' to Heaben" from her parents, who came to Texas from Louisiana. The song is generally known in southeast Texas. Since it is a direct paraphrase of Job i, 13-17, with the addition of the refrain and chorus, there is no set number of verses or, in reality, no set word order. Emma herself sang it differently each time, just as the spirit moved her. She could not even begin the song until I had read the Bible story to her for a while.



- 1 An' dere wus a day,  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
His sons an' his daughtahs  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
War eatin' an' a-drinkin'  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Dere come a messengah,  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
An' said unto Job:

*Chorus:* Job's goin' to heaben,  
O Job!  
Job's goin' to heaben,  
Job! Job!

- 2 De oxen war a-plowin'  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
An' de asses war a-feedin',  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
An' de Sa-ba-e-ans  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Fell upon dem  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
An' took dem away! Yea! dey

*Chorus:*

- 3 Have slew de sarvants  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Wid de edge ob de sword,  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
An' I alone  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Am escaped  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
To tell to dee!

*Chorus:*

- 4 Den say his wife  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Unto him,  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
"Dost thou still  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Detain thine interrity?  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Curse God an' die!"

*Chorus:*

- 5 He say to her:  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
"Thou speakest as a foolish 'oman.  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Blessed be de name  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
Ob de Lord!  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
De Lord giveth,  
(Job's goin' to heaben!)  
An' de Lord taketh away!"

*Chorus:*



JESUS RIDES A MILK-WHITE HOSS<sup>6</sup>

The Biblical stories appeal to the Negro, not only because of the reverent awe he has for them, but also because of their simplicity and vividness. They omit enough detail to give the mind play and furnish an excellent opportunity for the Negro to use his graphic power of description.

Compare Revelations vi, 2, "And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer," with the following spiritual:

*Allegro*

Jes-us rides a milk~white hoss, No man can hindah! He  
rides him up and down de cross, No man can hindah!

*Chorus:*  
Ride a-long, Jesus, No man can hindah! No man can hindah!

Jesus rides a milk-white hoss,  
No man can hindah!  
He rides him up an' down de cross,  
No man can hindah!

*Chorus:* Ride along, Jesus,  
No man can hindah!  
Ride along, Jesus,  
No man can hindah!

<sup>6</sup>A variant of the second stanza of "Ride on, King Jesus" (*The Jubilee Singers*, by G. D. Pike, Boston, 1873, p. 208), one of the songs sung by the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University on their tour for funds during the seventies; and of "No Man Can Hinder Me," Allen's *Slave Songs of the United States*, No. 14. The music of both is different from that recorded here. The line "He rides him up and down de cross" illustrates the hazards of oral transmission. In the earlier record it is "The River Jordan he did cross."—B.M.D.

I'M NEW BAWN<sup>7</sup>

For another example of the Negro's vivid and original treatment of Biblical subjects, note the manner in which Christ's birthplace, the statement Christ made to Nicodemus, and the Christian experience are all brought together in a stirring spiritual which my washerwoman, Nancy Washington, of Fort Worth, sang to me.

Chorus:

Way ober yondah in de harvest fields } Tell all de membahs I'm new  
 An- gels workin' on de chariot wheels! }

bawn, New bawn, new bawn, new bawn ba-by, Bawn in de mangah!

Tell all de mem-bahs I'm new bawn, Tell all de mem-bahs I'm new bawn

- 1 Way ober yondah in de harvest fields  
 Angels workin' on de chariot wheels!

*Chorus:* Tell all de membahs I'm new bawn,  
 New bawn, new bawn, new bawn baby,  
 Bawn in de mangah!  
 Tell all de membahs I'm new bawn,  
 New bawn, new bawn, new bawn baby,  
 Bawn in de mangah!  
 Tell all de membahs I'm new bawn!

- 2 Read de Scriptures, I am told,  
 Read 'bout de garment Achan stole!

*Chorus:*

<sup>7</sup>All the verses here given and one more are in W. H. Thomas's *Some Current Folk-Songs of the Negro*, published, without music, in 1912 by the Folk-Lore Society of Texas. The additional verse is as follows:

I'm so glad, I don't know what about,  
 O good Lord!  
 Sprinkling and pouring's done played out.

—B.M.D.

- 3 I went to de valley on a cloudy day,  
My soul got so happy dat I couldn't get away!

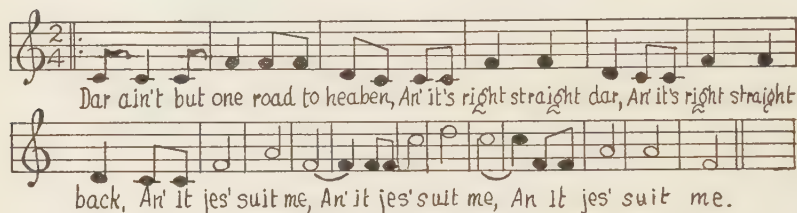
*Chorus:*

- 4 Away ober yondah got nothin' to do  
But walk 'bout heaben an' shout halloo!

*Chorus:*

### JES' SUIT ME<sup>s</sup>

The song "Jes' Suit Me" was sung by a negro of Elgin, Texas, in the south-central part of the state. Miss Eula Lee Carter, of Fort Worth, who contributed the song, said it was sung by her old negro mammy and that the darkey wore out many a washboard to its swinging melody. The song has many more verses than Miss Carter could recall.



- 1 Dere ain't but one road to heaben,  
An' it's right straight dar,  
An' it's right straight back,  
An' it jes' suit me,  
An' it jes' suit me,  
An' it jes' suit me.
- 2 John writ a letter,  
An' he writ it in a haste,  
An' he tole God's chillern  
Dat dey better make haste!  
An' it jes' suit me,  
An' it jes' suit me,  
An' it jes' suit me.

<sup>s</sup>"It Just Suit Me," in *The Negro and His Songs*, Odum and Johnson, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1925, p. 121, contains the second and third verses.—B.M.D.

- 3 Ezekiel spied a train a-comin',  
 He step on boa'd,  
 An' it neber stop runnin',  
 An' it jes' suit me,  
 An' it jes' suit me,  
 An' it jes' suit me.

## MY LAWD'S A BATTLE AX

"My Lawd's A Battle Ax" is one of the most interesting songs that I have. Eva Miles, a negro woman of Hearne, Texas, sang it to me. She said that it was composed by a man of Hillsboro, Texas. However, the song has all the earmarks of a true old spiritual, and a verse form which I would scarcely attribute to an individual's composition. I found one reference to "The World's Battle Axe" in Mr. R. E. Kennedy's *Mellows*, which would indicate that the idea of the song was much older than the contributor claimed, and that the song itself might possibly have come from Louisiana.

When I wus boun' in trouble, An' didn't know what to do, I  
 open my mouf unto de Lawd, Now de saints I mus' go through.  
*Chorus:* Oh! my Lawd's a battle~ ax, A battle ax, a battle ax!  
 Oh! my Lawd's a battle ax, A shelter in de time of storm!

- 1 When I wus boun' in trouble,  
 An' didn't know what to do,  
 I open my mouf unto de Lawd,  
 Now de saints I mus' go through.

*Chorus:* Oh! my Lawd's a battle ax,  
 A battle ax, a battle ax!  
 Oh! my Lawd's a battle ax,  
 A shelter in de time ob storm!



- 2 My Lawd did stan' befo' me  
 An' sweetly crossed His hands;  
 He said, "If ye love me,  
 Ye will keep my Comman'."

*Chorus:*

- 3 I wus meditat' wif my Lawd,  
 An' lifted mine eyes to Dee;  
 I said, "Thank God, now I'm saved!  
 Three times de light shine on me!"

*Chorus:*

### AN OFFERTORY

The queerest song I have discovered is a one-line song used for taking up the collection in a Negro church at Lufkin, Texas. Mrs. Werna Hargis, of Austin, who gave me the song, said that the Negroes sang it over and over as a dull, droning chant with slight variations of the melody.

All cum up an' numbah yo'self 'fo' de Lawd,  
 All cum up an' numbah yo'self 'fo' de Lawd, etc.

The time of the Negro spiritual is rapidly passing away. As the Negro becomes more and more acquainted with the white man's culture and civilization, he sees less and less need to express himself in an individual manner. Why do so? Is not all he attempts to do looked at with scorn or amusement? He is no longer isolated upon large estates as he once was, but he has become a wanderer who receives plenty of entertainment and sees many novel things to occupy his time and thoughts.

### O HAN' ME DOWN DE SILBER TRUMPET, GABRIEL

This yielding to environment recalls to my mind a scene that I witnessed while I was in search of songs at Hearne. It was late in the evening when my friend and I reached the colored settlement of the town. We went to see a woman who lived at a restaurant and who was reputed to have an excellent voice. After much coaxing she appeared at the door of the old building and invited us in. Inside the shabby room the most noticeable piece of furniture was an old piano with all the ivories

off. A party must have been in progress, for there were several young boys and girls present. When the woman was asked to sing some very old songs to us, she evinced embarrassment and said she did not know any. We insisted that she must know one, and she finally began to sing "That Ole Time Religion." Of course that was not what we wanted. She was so disappointed in our reception of her performance that she refused to sing again. Meanwhile one of the boys began to bang out jazz on the piano, and we were soon forgotten in a mad frenzy of wild dances and songs. An elderly woman noticed our panic and called the party's attention to us. In their chagrin, the woman got them to sing for us one religious song which is well known in Texas at least. It was "Han' Me Down de Silber Trumpet." The voices rang out with clearness and gusto.

If religion wus a thing dat money could buy,  
(O han' me down de silber trumpet, Gabriel!)  
De rich would lib an' de po' would die.  
(O han' me down de silber trumpet, Gabriel!)

*Chorus:* O han' me down, O han' me down,  
O han' me down de silber trumpet, Gabriel!  
O han' me down, O han' me down,  
O han' me down de silber trumpet, Gabriel!

## II. LOVE SONGS AND SONGS OF HOME LIFE

A comparison of this small group of songs with the large group of religious songs indicates the relative importance of religion in the Negro's life. In fact, it is doubtful if, in the strict sense of the word, these songs should be given any other classification than that of "secular songs." Some, or perhaps all of this group, are used for dance tunes. The Negro's nature is such that he rarely thinks of abstract love. He thinks only in concrete terms. Love means his "oman," and home means his "pallet on de flo'."

However, if we do consider these songs by subject matter, they cast a significant light upon the Negro's ethics and his living conditions. The incidental information that they give is much more valuable than any alien's study in the field. The Negro resents exploitation of songs of this type because

he realizes that they may serve for derision. The songs show standards so adverse to those of the white race and vehemence so barbaric that to the Caucasian mind they appear extremely undignified. Most of the songs I have of this group were given me by Mrs. L. B. Jones of the I. M. Terrill Colored High School of Fort Worth, and are unexpurgated. Coarseness is much in evidence, but most folk-literature has the coarseness of the people of the soil mixed with it, and the effect it has upon one depends upon one's sophistication.

### I LOVE YOU, BLACK GAL

The comparatively modern folk-song, "I Love You, Black Gal," reveals more about Negro home-life than many pages of a learned treatise on the subject. The singer tries to touch his gal's sympathy, not by threats of suicide, not by threats of harming her, but by telling her he is freezing and that he will go away to stay. The song gives a hint of individual composition. It works directly to a climax without the usual meanderings. The chorus is artistic, haunting.

- 1 I love you, black gal,  
God knows I do.

*Chorus:* Fare dee well, babe honey, fare dee well,  
Fare dee well, babe honey, fare dee well.

- 2 I love you from yo' head  
To yo' feet an' clean through.

*Chorus:*

- 3 I done all I could do,  
Tryin' to get along with you.

*Chorus:*

- 4 Make me a pallet down on de flo'.  
O babe honey, time comin' when a woman won't need no man.

*Chorus:*

- 5 I'll be satisfied wid an ap'on on de flo',  
Jes' spread an ap'on wide, an' I'll be satisfied.

*Chorus:*

- 6 Open dis do' an let me in,  
O babe, honey, I'se out heah freezin' an' wet to de skin.

*Chorus:*

- 7 I'se gwine away an' I'se goin' to stay,  
You won't know how good I am till I'se far away.

*Chorus:*

- 8 I'm packin' my trunk an' my satchel too,  
Cause I'se goin' jes' as far as I ken from you.

*Chorus:*

FARE DEE WELL<sup>9</sup>

Just as the preceding song gives the man's side of the love affair, so does the following song give the woman's. The first verse and refrain are astonishingly poetic, and one begins to expect something more refined; but the coarseness of relations creeps in and increases in evidence until the last verse, which has the coarse twang of the more modern "blues."

- 1 If I had wings like Noah's dove,  
I fly up de ribber to de man I lub.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 2 I've got a man an' he's long an' tall,  
He move his body like a cannonball.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 3 One ob dese days an' hit won't be long,  
Call my name an' I'll be gone.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 4 'Member one night drizzlin' rain,  
Roun' my heart I felt a pain?  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 5 When I wo' my ap'on low,  
You'd follow me eber where I go.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 6 Now I'se wear my ap'on high,  
Sca'cely eber see you passing by.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 7 Now my ap'on is up to my chin,  
You pass my do' but you don't look in.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.
- 8 If I'd a-listened to what my mamma said,  
I'd been a-sleepin' in my mamma's bed.  
Fare dee well, O honey, fare dee well.

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<sup>9</sup>Verses 5, 6, 7, 8 are, with slight divergence, a part of "Kelly's Love," in *The Negro and His Songs*, Odum and Johnson, p. 194.—B.M.D.



## I WENT DOWN TO NEW ORLEANS

"I Went Down to New Orleans" has a dance rhythm. The contributor, a pupil of the I. M. Terrill High School, Fort Worth, states that her parents learned the song in Tennessee.

- 1 I went down to New Orleans,  
I didn't go to stay,  
Threwed myself in a yaller gal's lap,  
An' de yaller gal fainted away.

*Chorus:* Roll on de groun', Lize,  
Roll on de groun'.  
Keep a-rollin', roll on de groun', Lize,  
Roll on de groun'.

- 2 When you got lots ob money,  
Roll in my arms;  
When all yo' money's gone,  
Roll on de groun'.

*Chorus:*

The two following fragments tell a very well known fact about relationships between man and woman of the Negro race.

You wants to be my brown?  
You got to lay forty dollahs down:  
I like honey,  
I like money,  
But, honey, lay de money down.

Don't I love my honey?  
I wouldn't spen' his money,  
He's de nicest little fellah;  
He's got de money too.  
He'll buy me a nice piano,  
An' won't I dance an' sing?  
He's de nicest little fellah,  
An' he's got de money too.

## OLE DAD DONE COME AGAIN

The following "poetic appeal to the senses" is entirely repellant to the white man's refinement:

Late las' night when we wus sleepin',  
Into de room somebody come creepin',  
My ma got mad, but she soon got glad,  
For she knew by de *scent* dat 'twas our dad!

*Chorus:* Ole dad done come again,  
Ole dad done come again,  
Ole dad done come again,  
Ole dad done come again.

### III. WORK SONGS AND SONGS OF FIELD LIFE

The term "work-song" has two connotations. Some writers take the term to mean those songs sung at work regardless of their subject matter. These collectors give the melodies of the songs with the grunts interspersed among the verses. Other writers take the term "work-song" to mean songs about work, classifying them according to the subject matter. To me, this classification is the more definite one, because the Negro sings most of his songs at his work.

A majority of these work-songs are, in my opinion, of post-bellum origin, because, although the Negro sang at his work before this time, he did not sing so much about the actual work itself. As a slave he took refuge in the more consoling songs of religion. After the Negro was freed and economic conditions changed for him, he became interested in the work itself. Sometimes his characteristic optimism gives way to an overpowering realization of his poor condition, and he sings:

I'se goin' from de cotton field,  
I'se goin' from de cane.  
I'se goin' from de little log hut  
Dat sets up in de lane.  
Dey tells me up in Kansas,  
So many miles away,  
Dey tells me up dere, honey,  
Dey're gettin' bettah pay.

A note made by the Negro pupil of the I. M. Terrill High School of Fort Worth, who gave me this song, states that it was sung by an ex-slave.

The Negro high-school pupil who sent in the next song says in a note that the verses were sung fifty years ago in "Mullin's Prairie, Fay County," for the amusement of the cotton pickers. I attempted to locate the town, but failed. There is no Fay County in the Southern states, and, so far as I could find, no Mullin's Prairie.

Ole Tom Palmer come down South,  
 Buyin' up niggers in de time ob de drought;  
 Times were hard, money wus sca'ce,  
 Po' niggers were dassent show dere face.

*Chorus:*<sup>10</sup> Heigho, Charleston gals,  
 Heigho, Charleston gals!  
 Ob all de gals I eber did see,  
 De Charleston gal is de gal fo' me!

#### HAPPY DARKIES WORKIN' ON DE LEVEE

"Happy Darkies Workin' on de Levee" comes from New Orleans. The note from the contributor, a pupil of the colored high school of Fort Worth, is an explanation of the song's usage: "About sixty years ago, down in New Orleans, there was a large group of darkies working on the levee. They would unload the steamboats that came in. They were all very happy as they waited for the arrival of the boats. When the boats would come in, you could hear them singing low":

Happy darkies workin' on de levee,  
 Happy darkies workin' on de levee,  
 Happy darkies workin' on de levee,  
 Waitin' fo' de steamboats to come down.

What is dat I hear whistlin' loud an' cleah?  
 O—O—O—O—O—Oooh—a!  
 I think hit is de Natchett or de Robe't Lee.  
 Come along an' jine our ban',  
 An' how happy we'll be.

#### IV. NEGRO SONGS ABOUT THE NEGRO

In one sense, the songs that the Negro sings about himself are the most characteristic of his songs. The white man's idea of the Negro is known well enough by both races, and, occasionally, some master novel or play gives an insight into the Negro's attitude toward the white race; but

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<sup>10</sup>Miss Scarborough, in *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, p. 162, reprints "Charleston Gals" from Allen's *Slave Songs of the United States*, together with much diverting comment and a variant or two. Only the chorus of Miss Bales's song resembles the slave song first published in 1867.—B.M.D.

rarely does the white man peep behind the screen of the races and discover what the Negro thinks about himself. Few of the songs in this class are serious.

## JES' DE SAME

The true blooded Negro has always held the mulatto in scorn. Carl Van Vechten has brought this fact out masterfully in his recent novel, *Nigger Heaven*. Dorothy Scarborough has related an amusing incident which I quote to illustrate the point:

"I learned of a quarrel Uncle Israel had had with one of the mulatto house servants about the question of color. She had disrespectfully called him a Nigger, and he had retorted: 'What if I is a Nigger? I belongs to a race of people, but you ain't. I didn't never read in de Bible whar it speaks of mulattoes as a race of people. You is *mules*, dat's what you is.'"<sup>11</sup> In spite of this derision, the Negro admits that the "yaller gal" is the more favored by fortune. This humorous song should prove optimistically encouraging to the "gal" of the deepest hue.

- 1 A yaller gal sleeps in a bed,  
A brown skin do de same;  
A black gal sleeps on de floor,  
But she's sleepin' jes' de same.
- 2 A yaller gal rides in a taxi,  
A brown skin do de same;  
A black gal rides in a flivver,  
But she's ridin' jes' de same.
- 3 A yaller gal eats de cake an' pie,  
A brown skin do de same;  
A black gal eats de ashy cake,  
But she's eatin' jes' de same.

---

<sup>11</sup>*On the Trail of the Negro Folk-Song*, p. 20.

A BLACK GAL<sup>12</sup>

- 1 I wouldn't marry a black gal,  
I'll tell you de reason why:  
Her hair so short an' kinkey,  
Break eber comb I buy.
- 2 I wouldn't marry a black gal,  
She's so black, you know;  
When I sees her comin'  
She look jes' like a crow.
- 3 I wouldn't marry a black gal,  
Tell you de reason why:  
She got so many kin-folks  
Dey makes yo' biscuits fly.

The following song tells of a situation so unusual that it must be the Negro's version of the story.

A nigger an' a white man  
Had a little bout.  
De nigger kicked de white man  
Plumb out ob sight.  
De white man said:  
"Dat's all right,  
I'll get him too  
On tomorrow night."

A nigger in de cane patch,<sup>13</sup>  
Couldn't count leben.  
Throwed him in de briar patch,  
An' he thought he went to heaben.

The Negro is extremely sensitive about the color of his skin. He excuses the defect to his children in this clever manner:

God made de nigger,  
Made him in de night,  
Made him in a hurry,  
An' forgot to paint him white.

---

<sup>12</sup>Compare Talley, T. W., *Negro Folk Rhymes*, p. 56. Meter and theme of the two songs are identical, but only the first two lines are alike.—B. M. D.

<sup>13</sup>Compare *Negro Folk Rhymes*, p. 161:

Once der wus a liddle boy dat couldn' count seben,  
Dey pitched him in a fedder bed; 'e though he's gwine to Heaben!  
—B. M. D.



## V. DANCE SONGS AND GAME SONGS

The dance songs are as old as the African race. In the fetish religion of Africa they play a large part, and for a long while they had their place in the Christian religion which the Negro accepted in America. The "shout," mentioned before, is nothing more or less than a remnant of the barbaric dances set to Christian religious tunes. There is the same shifting, circular, swaying motion, and for the beating of tom-toms is substituted the clapping of hands. The Negroes work themselves into the same frenzied state by an all-night "shout" as their ancestors did in a whirling, shaking dance of the "voodoo" religious festival in Africa.

The "wor'ly" Negroes have their dances, but these very closely resemble the motion of the "shout." One dancer is given the center of the floor, and the others of the group form a circle around him. The circle claps and hums the tune or sings verses while the dancer goes through the contortions to the rhythm of the singing. Sometimes two dancers are in the center, and occasionally the group calls out for some other person of the ring to join the one in the middle. As a general thing, each dancer versed in a "step" takes his turn in the center of the group. The dancer stops when he is exhausted, and another dancer takes his place. The circle, meanwhile, moves around with a dragging side-step or stamps in time. These dances have some little resemblance to the folk-dances of other nations, in that a pair of dancers, or one dancer *par excellence* executes the steps while the group looks on and furnishes music and rhythm.

From the description of the dance, one can readily see how the dance song might originate. Instead of a tune hummed or sung, words might be supplied. It is much easier to sing words to a tune than to sing the tune to *tra-la-la*, etc. It offers an excellent opportunity for the clever person to show his ingenuity. As a result of their composition, the dance rhymes are often mere nonsense, or at best illogical; but the words fit the tunes exactly, and in many instances go so far as to suggest the melodies.

Those who "star dance," as the motion within the circle is called, have to beat an intricate tattoo on the floor to the accompaniment of every word of the verse, and frequently

to every syllable. As the variations come from stanza to stanza, the skill of the dancer is tested to the utmost. Thomas Talley calls the dance "graceful." I leave the judgment of the term to those who have seen jigging or the Charleston of the present day, not to mention the "black bottom," since these dances are varieties of the "star dance."

#### JAY BIRD SETTIN' ON A HICKORY LIMB<sup>14</sup>

The dance songs are more easily classified than any of the others with the exception of the spiritual. One can hardly read this song without getting into the swing of it:

- 1 Jay bird settin' on a hickory limb  
Down in de harvest gahdens;  
Picked up a brickbat, hit 'em on de jaw,  
Down in de harvest gahdens.
- 2 Choose de gal wid de curly hair,  
Kiss her an' call her honey;  
Choose de gal wid de rulin' eyes,  
De one dat doan' lub money.

#### WATERMELON IS BEST<sup>15</sup>

The game songs are short, as a rule, and very simple in composition. This seems to be one:

O ham-bone is sweet, sweet, sweet,  
Bacon is good, good, good,  
'Possum meat is bery, bery fine,  
But give me, O give me,  
I really wish you would,  
Dat watermillion hangin' on de vine!

The following song seems to be for children:

Nobody home but puss an' baby,  
Fry a little meat an' make a little gravy,  
Cook a little green corn, green corn, green.

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<sup>14</sup>The first line is a commonplace, though sometimes the "hickory limb" is a "swingin' limb." For variants of the first stanza see Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, pp. 110, 111; and Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes*, p. 15.—B. M. D.

<sup>15</sup>Superior to Talley's version, p. 110.—B. M. D.

## IT'S A-HAILIN'

This fragment is not so innocent in its theme and has the swing of the dance tune.

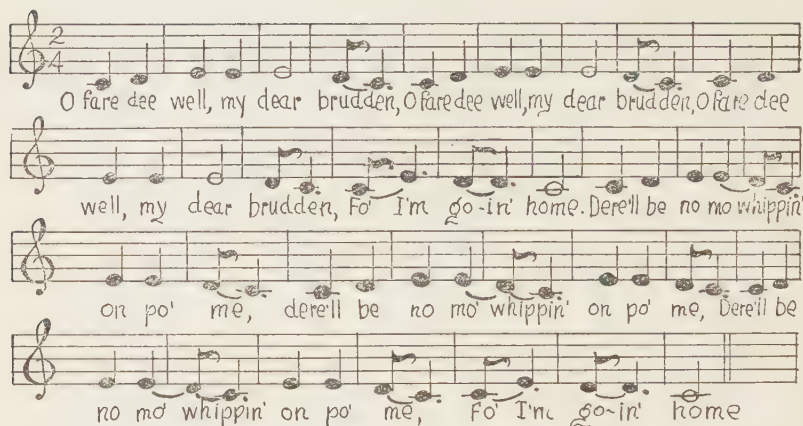
It's a-hailin',  
It's a-rainin',  
It's cold an' stormy weader,  
In come a farmer sellin' apple cider.  
Drink all de whiskey, boys,  
An' knock de tumblahs ober,  
Pick up de little boys, an'—  
Kick de big uns ober.

## V. MISCELLANEOUS SONGS

## I'M GOIN' HOME

A few Negro folk-songs defy classification. Some of them are religious in a certain way, but they can never be accepted as spirituals. For example, a song given me by Emma Johnson, of Beaumont, is religious in tone, but there is such a definite reference in it to other things that the song loses its spiritual quality and takes upon itself something else—human interest. Emma furnished me with an account of its origin, though I refuse to vouch for its authenticity.

Emma's father was the chief entertainer of the plantation down in Louisiana, and by his art he had won the indulgence of his master. His brother Al, on the other hand, was an enormous, bulky, stupid negro who annoyed everyone by his clumsiness. Al invariably received the beatings due to the whole family. One day, after he had been mercilessly whipped by the overseer, he ran away. The owner immediately put the bull-dogs on his track. The dogs found him and almost tore his hands to pieces before the men came to pull them off. The patrol took Al back and put him in stocks. The slave driver then whipped him, alternating Bible admonitions with curses at each blow of the leathern thongs. When Al's back was bleeding and raw, the driver threw the Negro face down upon the ground and poured pounds of salt upon the raw wounds to keep the flesh from rotting. Not content with this precaution, the driver rubbed in the salt with the sole of his shoes and then added black pepper. While Al was in the throes of his pain he sang his song.



*Chorus:* O fare dee well, my dear brudden,  
O fare dee well, my dear brudden,  
O fare dee well, my dear brudden,  
Fo' I'm goin' home!

- 1 O I'm goin' up home to heaben,  
O I'm goin' up home to heaben,  
O I'm goin' up home to heaben,  
Where pleasures neber die!

*Chorus:* O fare dee well, my dear sistern, etc.

- 2 O de bull-dog done bitin' po' me,  
O de bull-dog done bitin' po' me,  
O de bull-dog done bitin' po' me,  
Fo' I'm goin' home!

*Chorus:* O fare dee well, my dear eldahs, etc.

- 3 Dere'll be no mo' whippin' on po' me,  
Dere'll be no mo' whippin' on po' me,  
Dere'll be no mo' whippin' on po' me,  
Fo' I'm goin' home!

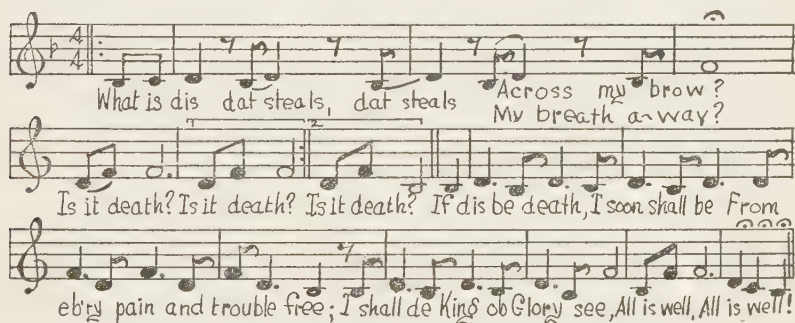
*Chorus:* O fare dee well, my dear friends, etc.

Since I find similar verses in other collections, it is my belief that Al added a verse or so to a well-known song.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>See Allen, *Slave Songs of the United States*, No. 63, "Fare Ye Well, My Brudden."

## WHAT IS DIS?

The other semi-religious song to which I refer has an equally interesting history. The story was told me by the same Negro. The bell of the plantation rang in the morning to call the slaves to the fields. One old Negro woman was so ill that she could not get up. The mistress, who was feared by the Negroes because of her cruelty to them, found the darkey in bed. She tried to force the sick Negro to get up and go to work, and when the Negro did not obey her, she choked the unfortunate almost to death. The old darkey, when she regained her senses, lay there and sang this song, the melody of which is so weird that it makes shivers run over one's body.



- 1 What is dis dat steals, dat steals  
Across my brow?  
Is it death? Is it death?  
What is dis dat steals, dat steals  
My breath away?  
Is it death? Is it death?

*Chorus:* If dis be death, I soon shall be  
From eb'ry pain an' trouble free;  
I shall de King ob Glory see,  
All is well, all is well!

- 2 What is dis dat make, dat make  
My pulse beat feeble an' slow?  
Is it death? Is it death?  
What is dis dat creeps, dat creeps  
Across my frame?  
Is it death? Is it death?



## ROCK ME IN JUBILEE

There is one other song which seems in the opening verse and chorus to be a spiritual. I had all the trouble in the world trying to get the Negro to sing it to me, and never would she go farther than the first part of the song. When I urged and pleaded with her to continue, she said, "No'm, I ain't boun' to sing you dat song; it ain't fo' people like you an' me." What the secret is I shall never know, for no amount of strategy could get her to sing the rest. Since she was a Christian Negro, the song must be "wor'ly."

1 Eldah came to my house.

*Chorus:* Rock me, Eldah, rock me, O my Lawd,  
Rock me in heaben,  
Rock me in Zion,  
Rock me in Jubilee!

*Chorus:*

2 Thought he came to see me.

*Chorus:*

3 When I come to find out.

*Chorus:*

4 Persuade my wife to leab me!

*Chorus:*

## JOHNNY MEE-KEE-MEE-COY

The following nonsense lines may be a game song.

Three little crows sat on a limb,  
(Johnny mee—kee—mee—coy)  
One little crow said to de othah,  
(Johnny mee—kee—mee—coy)  
"What'll we hab to eat, little brudder?"  
(Johnny mee—kee—mee—coy)  
And dey flop dere wings an' cried,  
"Johnny mee—kee—mee—coy."

DE ALLIGATOR MOUNTINS

The following song, which refers to the Allegheny Mountains(?), is very similar in tone: ,

"Little jack rabbit,  
Where did you come from  
When you come here?"  
"From de Alligator Mountins,  
From de Alligator Mountins,  
When I come here.  
I'se goin' back to de Alligator Mountins,  
To de Alligator Mountins whah I b'longs."

WENT OUT HUNTIN'

"Went Out Huntin'" has the swing of an old-fashioned "break-down."

- 1 Fish an' bread had a time,  
Fish chase bread right down de line.
- 2 Fish wus raw, bread wus done,  
Los' my money on a five-foot come.
- 3 Went out huntin' de othah day,  
Up jumps a rabbit right in my way.
- 4 Dat ole rabbit started to run,  
I couldn't do a thing wid my double-barrel gun.
- 5 I pick up de rabbit an' carried him home  
Dat ole rabbit wus about ha'f grown.
- 6 Tole my wife to bake him brown,  
Put sweet 'taters all aroun',  
Man, you couldn't hardly hole de wood pile down!

In a song given me by a pupil of the I. M. Terrill High School, of Fort Worth, the famous old ballad "Barbara Allen" has undergone a strange transformation. The verses are clearly a fragment, but in that fragment the Negro has succeeded in reversing matters, changing the fair Barbara into a man, Boberick. However, the girl is still the disdainful one.

- 1 When I wus but a girl sixteen,  
I wus in love with Boberick;  
De othah girls did not see  
Why he did always follow me.

- 2 He walk to town an' den right back,  
 To see if I wus on his track,  
 But he could neber fin' me dah,  
 Becuz I wus away somewhah.  
 His name wus Boberick Allen.

### GEORGE WENT A-HUNTIN'

The song "George Went a-Huntin'" is almost an African chant. It has the same melody for each line, which gives a monotonous, droning sound. The song is probably a nursery chant to entertain children.



- 1 George went a-huntin',  
O Mount Zion!
- 2 He kill a eagle,  
O Mount Zion!
- 3 He carry him home to mamma,  
O Mount Zion!
- 4 She put him in de oben,  
O Mount Zion!
- 5 De oben couldn't bake him,  
O Mount Zion!
- 6 She throw him to de hogs,  
O Mount Zion!
- 7 Broke de hog's jaw bone,  
O Mount Zion!
- 8 She throw him to de buzzards,  
O Mount Zion!
- 9 Broke de buzzard's bill,  
O Mount Zion!
- 10 She put him in de riber,  
O Mount Zion!
- 11 De las' time I saw him,  
O Mount Zion!
- 12 He war floatin' down de riber,  
O Mount Zion!

## SIX NEW NEGRO FOLK-SONGS WITH MUSIC

BY NICOLAS JOSEPH HUTCHINSON SMITH

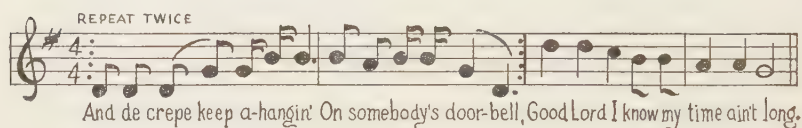
At the present time, in spite of the excellent work of Professor Howard W. Odum, of the University of North Carolina, and of Miss Dorothy Scarborough, of Columbia University, the research student who would be absolutely certain of his folk-song origins must await the long expected publishing of Professor Newman I. White, of Duke University. Up to 1922, several years before the recent rise of the *cultus* of the Negro song, Professor White had perhaps the largest collection of Negro folk-songs still unpublished. My own particular interest in the Negro song began at that time; it was divulged to the public in a paper published in the *Sewanee Review* of April, 1924. That monograph aimed to trace the development of such songs, from their first recorded appearance in 1795 down to the year 1922, and to show briefly in what ways Negro folk-songs were similar to Scottish and to early English folk-songs.

In 1923, I managed to interest many of my freshman students at the College of William and Mary in my desire to collect a few of the authentic songs exactly as the Negroes were still singing them. With the help of these students and of certain members of the faculty who took me very kindly into their confidences, I formed a small collection of about thirty-five different songs, the original copies of which now repose in the fire-proof room at the library of the College of William and Mary. Six only of all these songs appear at the present moment to be distinctive and original enough for publication by the Texas Folk-Lore Society. They happen to be all those the tunes of which I was able to learn at the time that the words were given to me.

Four of these six are from four different counties of Virginia, and two are from North Carolina. To the best of my knowledge none of the music has ever been published before. In copying down the musical notes, I have been greatly aided by Mr. W. M. Whitehill, Jr., of the Department of Fine Arts, in Harvard University.

## DE HAMMAH KEEP A-RINGIN'

This song with its music is from South Norfolk, Virginia, and was handed to me by Mr. R. L. Beale of that town. It is known commonly throughout Virginia. Lines or stanzas which appear in separate versions of the song are numbered separately.

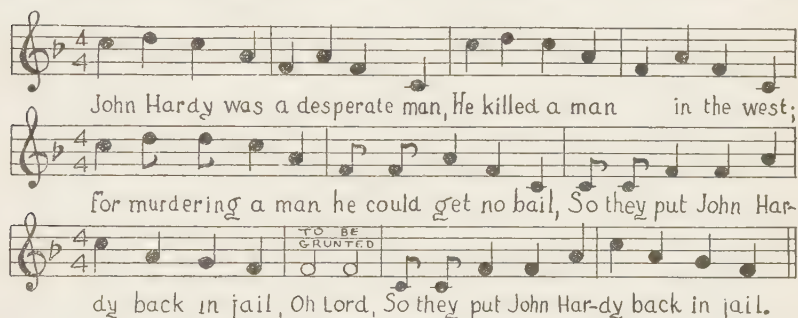


- 4 And de crepe keep a-hangin'  
     On somebody's doorbell,  
 And de crepe keep a-hangin'  
     On somebody's doorbell,  
 And de crepe keep a-hangin'  
     On somebody's doorbell,  
 Good Lord, I know my time ain't long.
- 2, 3 O de hammah keep a-ringin'  
 1 [*De hammah keep a-ringin'*]  
     On somebody's cawfin,  
 O de hammah keep a-ringin'  
     On somebody's cawfin,  
 O de hammah keep a-ringin'  
     On somebody's cawfin,  
 3 O Lord, I know my time is nigh.  
 2 [*O Lord, I know my time has come.*]  
 1 [*O Lord, I know my time is near.*]
- 2, 3 O de hearse keep a-rollin'  
 1 [*De hearse keep a-rollin'*]  
 2 To somebody's graveyard,  
 1 [*Somebody to de graveyard,*]  
 3 [*Somebody to their grave,*]  
     O de hearse keep a-rollin'  
     To somebody's graveyard,  
     O de hearse keep a-rollin'  
     To somebody's graveyard,  
 3 O Lord, I know my time is nigh.  
 1 [*O Lord, I know my time is near.*]  
 2 [*O Lord, I know my time has come.*]



## JOHN HARDY

This song with its music, from North Carolina, was handed to me by Mr. Bailey L. Tucker of that state in October, 1924. There are numerous versions of the words of "John Hardy" in Cox's *Folk-Songs of the South*. This version, slightly differing in words from all of them and new in print as to its music, belongs strictly to the Negroes. It is said to be best sung when the singer is under the influence of corn whiskey.



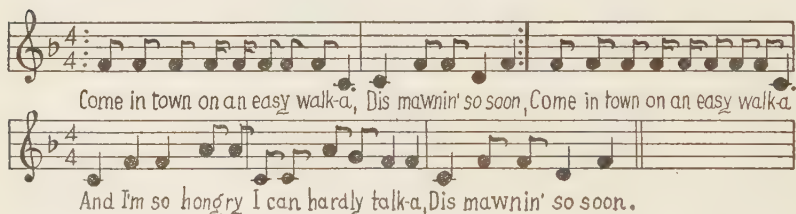
- 1 John Hardy was a desperate man,  
 He killed a man in the West;  
 For murdering a man he could get no bail,  
 So they put John Hardy back in jail,  
 O Lord,  
 So they put John Hardy back in jail.
- 2 "I don't want your ten dollar bill,  
 I don't want your change;  
 All I want is a forty-four gun,  
 To blow out your dirty black brains,  
 O Lord,  
 To blow out your dirty black brains."
- 3 Down came the girl John Hardy loved,  
 Dressed all in blue;  
 She threw her arms around John Hardy's neck,  
 Said, "John Hardy, I'll be true,  
 To you,  
 John Hardy, I'll be true."
- 4 Down came his mother and his father too,  
 They were hanging 'round;  
 John Hardy said to his mother and his father,  
 "You're standing on my hanging ground,  
 O Lord,  
 You're standing on my hanging ground."

5 "The longest train I ever rode,  
 Came down the Santa Fé line;  
 The engine come by at half past four,  
 And the cab came by at nine,  
 O Lord,  
 And the cab came by at nine.

6 "I don't care how you bury me,  
 I don't care how I die;  
 Just bury me by the Santa Fé,  
 Where I can hear the trains go by,  
 O Lord,  
 Where I can hear the trains go by."

### COME IN TOWN

The Negro author or singer of this song was Louis Baker, ex-slave and noted singer of work-songs, of Louisa Court House, Virginia. His version, words and music, was very kindly presented to me in February, 1924, by a former colleague in the Department of English at William and Mary, Dr. Edward M. Gwathmey.

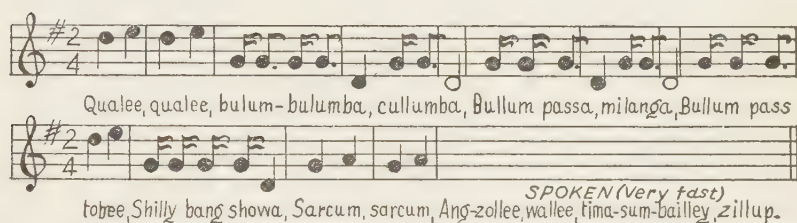


Come in town on an easy walk-a,  
 Dis mawnin' so soon,  
 Come in town on an easy walk-a,  
 Dis mawnin' so soon,  
 Come in town on an easy walk-a,  
 And I'm so hongry I can hardly talk-a,  
 Dis mawnin' so soon.

### A SONG

Of all the songs in my little collection, the most interesting and important is that one I have labeled "A Song." Its history is absolutely clear and absolutely authentic. It is of

the nature of a call—like a yodle to the Swiss mountaineer—and its words sound like a vivid but unintelligible description of a battle or a cyclone. It is said to be of direct African origin. It was presented by Dr. Richard L. Morton, of the College of William and Mary, the song having been preserved in his family for three generations. It appeared in Granville County, North Carolina, about 1845, and it has never been printed.<sup>1</sup>



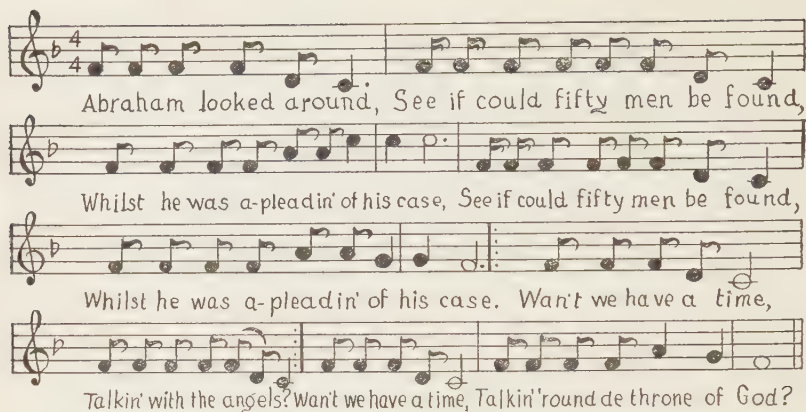
Qualee, qualee, bulum-bulumba, cullumba,  
 Bullum passa, milanga,  
 Bullum pass tobee,  
 Shilly bang showa,  
 Sarcum, sarcum,  
 Ang-zollie, wallee, tima-sum-bailley, zillup.

#### ABRAHAM

"Abraham," a song of the ballad-type, was acquired by Dr. Richard L. Morton from Pack Jeffries, a Negro of Prince Edward County, Virginia. The song is really made up of five stanzas, but all of them are identical with the first except that the number "fifty" is successively reduced to "forty," "thirty," "twenty," and "ten." The closest analogues of the song are early English and Scottish.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Talley, Thomas J., *Negro Folk Rhymes*, N. Y., 1922, p. 216 ff., has several "African rhymes," none of them, however, secured from the United States.—EDITOR.

<sup>2</sup>Mr. Palmer A. Throop, of the University of Texas, has called attention to the fact that the tune of this song, or something almost identical, was used by Anton Dvorak in the first movement of his "New World Symphony."—EDITOR.

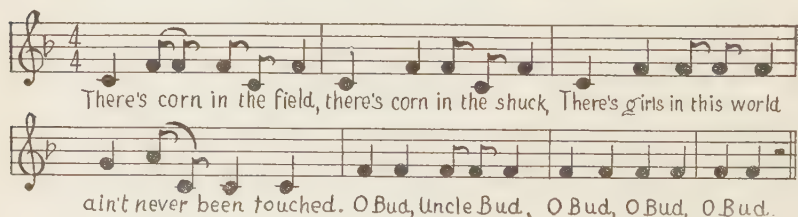


Abraham looked around, See if could fifty men be found,  
 Whilst he was a-pleadin' of his case, See if could fifty men be found,  
 Whilst he was a-pleadin' of his case. Wan't we have a time,  
 Talkin' with the angels? Wan't we have a time, Talkin' round de throne of God?

Abraham looked around,  
 See if could fifty men be found,  
 Whilst he was a-pleadin' of his case,  
 See if could fifty men be found,  
 Whilst he was a-pleadin' of his case.  
 Wan't we have a time,  
 Talkin' with de an-gels?  
 Wan't we have a time,  
 Talkin' with de an-gels?  
 Wan't we have a time,  
 Talkin' 'round de throne of God?

## O BUD!

The nature of this song is such as to prohibit the printing here of the six collected stanzas that go with the music. The words are deposited in the Harvard College Library, as well as at the College of William and Mary. The song was sung for my benefit by Mr. Page W. Powell, in 1924; he said that he learned it in Northampton County, Virginia.



There's corn in the field, there's corn in the shuck, There's girls in this world  
 ain't never been touched. O Bud, Uncle Bud, O Bud, O Bud, O Bud.

There's corn in the field, there's corn in the shuck,  
 There's girls in this world ain't never been touched.  
 O Bud, Uncle Bud, O Bud, O Bud, O Bud.

## CONFIDENCES FROM OLD NACOGDOCHES

BY MARTHA EMMONS

[Editor's Note.—The temptation cannot be resisted to refer the reader to an extraordinary book that has recently made its appearance: *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, by Newbell Niles Puckett, published by the University of North Carolina Press, 1926. Here for the first time is assembled in an orderly way, compared, and interpreted a vast body, long gathering, of Negro folk-lore respecting ghosts, witches, Voodooism, conjuring, charms, cures, taboos, omens, the devil, and other forms of superstition. Whoever wishes to relate and understand the Negro folk-lore that Miss Emmons has gathered can do no better than read Dr. Puckett's book. It and Odum and Johnson's two volumes—*The Negro and His Songs* and *Negro Workaday Songs*,—all three published by the University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, are almost a complete exposition of Negro folk-lore.]

These Negro superstitions and tales were gathered by me and my pupils of the Nacogdoches High School during 1926–1927. They by no means exhaust our findings, but they represent pretty well the folk-lore still very common among Negroes of East Texas.

### I. OMENS

“Now, honey, you'll jes' hafta bile dat word down some. I cain't get it somehow.”

Such was the advice given to three high school girls, Jennie Bell Warner, Bernice Parker, and Eunice Moore, when they applied to Allah Jones (colored) for instruction in “superstitions.” After a lengthy explanation, and after their learning the use of the word “omen,” the bond of confidence was at last established, and old Allah, eyeing the young ladies across the fence and munching the candy they had given her, pointed a bony finger by way of emphasis, rolled her eyes, and began:

“Chile, don' nevah marry on a rainy day, 'cause ef'n you do, sho's you bohn, yuh'll shed as many teahs after you's married as draps o' rain falls on yo' weddin' day. An' don'



you nevah let nobody sweep under de baid whar any o' yo' folks is sick, neither, 'cause dey'll die sho'. I nevah knowed dat sign to fail."

"Allah, what about all this business of a rabbit crossing your track? Is that a bad sign?"

"Well'm, no'm, not always. Ef'n you'll jes' stop an' say, 'Mawnin', Mistuh Rabbit,' hit ain' no bad sign.

"You chil'en know mah pappy. Well, he won' no mo' speak to a black man on Monday mawnin' dan he'll let you whup him. No suh, dat he won'. He say he use to, but dat done brung him too much bad luck, an' he won't do it no mo' 'tall. You min' out 'bout fallin' down on a Monday too, 'cause dat's a awful bad sign. 'Tain' so much whut happens to you dat day, but de res' o' de whole week. F'om den plum on to Monday agin, ain't no tellin' whut all can happen.

"Now ef'n you-all wants to hab good luck, a pow'ful good thing to do is to wear a nickel or a quatah 'roun' yo' wris' or yo' ankle; or to look at de new moon ovah yo' lef' shoulder; or to dream o' clear wattuh; but Lor', it's de wus' thing in de wuhl to dream o' muddy wattuh, or to see a jaybird on a Friday. Don' you nevah burn three lights in one room at a time neither, baby, nor let de chaiah what you been settin' in keep a-rockin' after you gits up, nur turn yo' chaiah 'roun' 'dout you lif' it up off'n de flo'.

"O my Lawd, dey's mo' things causes trouble what lot o' folks don' know nothin' about, or don't b'lieve when dey do know! Lak Mis' Bob Jordan: now she done let dat little boy what live nex' do' bring a little axe in her kitchen, to show her one day. Aunt Ca'line jes' beg her to make 'im go back wid dat axe, but Mis' Jordan she jes' laff an' say, 'Aw, Auntie, dat little ole axe ain' gonna hurt you!' An' sho' 'nough, Mr. Bob he come home dat night sick wid tiford fever an' you know how nigh he come a-dyin'. Hit won' nevah do to make out you don't b'lieve in things like dat, 'cause sho's you bohn to die, you'll fin' out some day when it's done too late.

"When somebody comes to see you what you don' wanna see no mo', you know how to keep 'em from comin' back? All you got to do's jes' th'o a little salt at 'em when dey leaves, an' dey won' nevah come back no mo'. Ah done dat one time when dat ole Roberta kep' a-comin' an' she ain' been back no

mo', an' ah know dat's huccome she ain', 'cause she use to come ovah heah constant.

"When you combs yo' haiah, don' you nevah let it lay aroun' yo' house or in yo' yahd, 'cause de birds'll git it, an' ef'n dey buil's dey nestes in it, you'll go crazy sho.'

"Don' none o' you chil'en nevah let none o' yo' gentman frien's gib you a fan, whatevah yo' do. Ah's seed too many couples git all broke-up dat away. Dey say it fans de frien'-ship away, some way. Ah don't know how it is."

Venturing to ask why it was that some years there seemed to be so many deaths among the black folk, one of the girls was told the sad cause: "Evah time you see a dahk Christmus you jes' min' out: dey's gonna be lots o' cullud folks die dat yeah."

## II. "HANTS"

One "spirit authority" consulted by these three girls is Pearl Moore, a fat, good-natured Negro woman, who rocked and rolled with her whole body as she talked.

"Well, de Lawd be praised! An' you-all nevah is heahed 'bout dat ole hanted house out on dat Douglass road, what was burned down? I thought evahbody in dis wuhl knowed 'bout dat. Whut makes it so bad out there yet is 'cause some boys got skeered and tried to get shet o' dem ghos's, and dat made 'em mad."

The particular phenomenon under discussion is a white object of uncertain features that seems to float across the road at a certain point. It is explained by the more material minded as a reflection from the lights of the sawmill, but not so by Pearl.

"Dat ole house whut use' to stan' there evahbody knowed wuz hanted. Some'n white use' to always float out o' de winder facin' de road, an' go right acrost dat road an' git los' in dem pines ovah on de south side. Some boys kep' a-seein' dat sign evah night, tell bimeby dey 'lowed dey'd git shet o' dat ghos', an' dey come dah one night an' burned de house down. But Lawd, Lawd! Hit takes a heap mo'n dat to skeer a ghos'. But I know dis to be a fac' dat one o' dem boys died 'fo' long after dat, but dat ghos' hit ain' gone yit. Ef'n you don' b'lieve it, you jes' go out on dat Douglass road

tonight tell you come to dat little ole chimbley standin' on dat hill on de nawth o' de road, an' you'll see some'n white come a-floatin' right acrost dat road, an' hit ain' nothin' but dat sperit what dem boys tried to kill."

Where Pearl once lived there were many deer. One night her father and brother went hunting. They saw some deer and shot at them. Then, "Ezry—dat's my brothuh—he shot at dat deer, an' 'fo' Gawd, dat deer begin to go 'roun' in a circle an' rise up off'n de groun', tell he 'uz plum out o' sight. Now 'tain' no use foh me to tell you ef dey run; an' how fas' dey run ah' don' know; but dey sho' wuz out o' bref when dey come in home. Ezry he 'gin to try to tell about it; but my pa he wuzn't right rationable foh a good bit aftah dat, he 'uz so skeered."

One of the girls came forward with, "Gee, I don't blame him. I should have been scared too. I'll bet they never did go deer-hunting any more." But here she was corrected.

"Yes'm dey did, sweet lamb. Dey went agin nex' night; an' dat time dey tuck de dogs wid 'em; an' you min' what ah tell you, dey seen another deer, an' when dey shot at 'im, dat deer an' all dem dogs ris' up in de air, goin' 'roun' an' 'roun', gittin' closer in an' higher up all de time, tell finely dey 'uz plum out o' sight, but dem dogs barked an' whined up dah foh fo' days. Ah 'member heahin' 'em mahself when I wuz a little gal. An' dey nevah did come back; an' dey wan' nevah no mo' deers in dem woods, neither. Ef'n dey had a been, my pa an' Ezry wouldn' a went after 'em, 'cause dey ain' nevah been deer-huntin' no mo' aftah dat night."

Berta Mae White, a robust colored girl of some fifteen years, was urged to desist from her ironing long enough one morning to discourse upon the subject of "hants" and "signs," for the benefit of Bernice Parker. On this particular occasion Berta Mae's toilet had evidently been arranged more in accordance with the idea of the picturesque than of the beautiful; for her feet were unencumbered with shoes or stockings; her khaki knickers (whose only evidence of ever having been laundered was the faded color) reached an uncertain length below the knees, and the connection of the blouse at the waist line was equally uncertain; her grey-and-blue silk hat of ancient make, together with a very bold locket, bracelet, and ring, finished making of her a rather interesting looking person.

Some imperfection of one eye caused each of her eyes to have the appearance of constantly rolling in search of its mate. Questioned as to a certain old deserted house near Appleby, she confided thus.

"Yeah, it's hanted. Worse'n any place, ah reck'n. A ghos' runs 'roun' dah all time. Yassum it do! An' jes' hollers sometimes, an' makes all kine o' funny noises. A 'oman used to live dah wid her little boy; but one day she up an' died an' lef' 'er baby. 'Co'se somebody had to come git 'im an' try to raise 'im; so his aunt an' uncle come an' stayed wid 'im. But dey kep' on a-heahin' dem groans an' funny soun's evah night; an' one night dey seen a ghos' come right in at de do' an' grab dat boy an' run aroun' in dat house like hit 'uz gonna take aftah 'em; but it sho' ain' cotch 'em, 'cause dey jes' hist dey haid an' flew! Dey ain' been back no mo', an' dey ain' no nigguh live' dah sence; an' what's mo', heah's one what ain' nevah gonna live dah!"

Wishing to know a little more about the general habits of "hants," Jennie Bell Warner asked her how they looked.

"Well, sometimes dey 'pears in de shape o' hosses, goats, hogs—anything. I seen one wid a axe on 'is back."

"Will they vanish when you speak to them?"

"Well, now, jes' to tell you de truf, ah ain' nevah spoke to one of 'em, and ah don't reck'n ah evah will. But dey sho' will speak to you, 'cause ah 'member once when one o' dem ghos's come and knock at ouh do'. When mah pappy went to de do' to see what dey wanted, dey say dey wanna come in. Mah pappy he hit at one of 'em an' dey run an' jump in dat crick right down theah b'low dat hill, an' floated away on de watah."

"Well, will they hurt you, Berta Mae?"

"Well'm, dey'll slap you sideways. Ah don' know's dey hurts when dey hits you, but dey makes yo' haid sideways, an' you'll stay dataway tell you die."

Olivia Lilly, a high-school student whose home is near Appleby, prevailed upon Bill Taylor, a middle-aged negro who works on the Lilly farm, to tell her why he will not go to town at night alone over the main road, though he will go through the muddy fields. Bill had almost as great a struggle with his tobacco as with some of his words while he talked with the young lady.



"Well, all I know is dat one time a woman lef' heah wid a man what wan' her husban'. They'd got to de bridge down yonner when she seen her husban' a-comin'. When he went to kill dis man she 'uz wid, she 'gin to scream an' cry to try to git 'im to persist in de 'temp'; but it didn't do no good an' she died herself, an' now you c'n heah her screamin' an' cryin' 'mos' any night you go down dah—on'y I ain't a-goin'."

When asked if he had ever really seen a ghost, Bill confessed his misfortune, and said that so far as he knew, unless a certain black cat was a ghost, he had never been permitted to see one; but that his brother could see ghosts even now, and that many a time he had been walking with him, and he would begin talking with some person that poor Bill could neither see nor hear.

The one evening that I saw Bill, he and his family were on the porch of their small home. The further the tale-telling progressed, the more definitely the little urchins kept their places on the porch and sought the society of their elders; and I began to have a little misgiving as to my eight-mile drive home, by way of that very haunted bridge. Especially did I have my doubts after Clara, the wife, in her hoarse voice, told us of the one haunted house she had lived in.

"My mothah was gone one day, an' my sisters wuz a-scarin' me. So ah run into de house an' on into one room an' shet de do'. Ah thought ef ah got de do' shet and got under de baid, nothin' wouldn' git me. So ah locked de do' an' crawled under de baid, an' fus' thing ah know ah see a little white puppy runnin' all aroun' me. Ah watched 'im tell all at once he jes' got out o' my sight somehow. Den ah knowed he wuz a ghos', 'cause dey wan' no do' nur winder op'n. Ah know whar it come f'om, do', 'cause dat wuz when we wuz livin' up dah by Ole No'th Chu'ch, an' Bill's brother he seen balls o' fiah rollin' along de top wire o' de fence lots o' times, he say."

About six miles from Nacogdoches, out on the Woden road—if part of that trail should be thus dignified—is a place known as "Haunted Hollow." We should probably never have thought to look into its history had not a "'possum-huntin'" party, of which I was a member, become lost there one night. After crossing and re-crossing the railroad tracks and weaving in and out among trees and after being informed some six or eight times that we were still "about two miles" from Woden, we



were informed by a native that we were in Haunted Hollow and that if we waited a little while longer we could hear "the cowboy"! At this particular time none of us had any desire to hear or see "the cowboy." Some days later, however, through the efforts of Miss Iantha Carr Haltom, we secured concrete evidence as to why Haunted Hollow bears its name.

Long, long ago, as one story goes, a cowboy was killed in this place, but not a night since the killing have the dwellers around failed to hear him pop his whip and call to his cattle. The rattle of his spurs and the clatter of his horses' hoofs are nightly in the wind.

A Mexican woman was buried there also, and her ghost seems to run Banquo's a close second. She bobs up at almost any time, and in almost any form. A crowd of our high-school boys declare that not long after she was buried they were passing through the hollow and saw a ghost in the form of a dog leap bodily from her grave. Every boy in the crowd shot AND HIT the little animal but could not even in this way discourage him from following them. When at last they reached their door they shot again, and saw him vanish into the air. They declare also that on almost any night wails and moans from women and children may be heard in the Hollow. I recall one night when several people thought of wailing; perhaps less hardy souls do give way to their feelings!

Nina Matlock met a withering glance when she first asked a certain old-fashioned Negro woman about the existence of ghosts. But when the young lady intimated that she herself had once seen what might have been a ghost, the kindly old Negro relented.

"You know, baby, one night jes' after my ol' man died, ah was settin' by myself in my house, when all at once ah heard somebody knockin' at my do.' Ah say, 'Come in,' and dat do' open and bless de Lawd ef'n it wusn't my ol' man, in his grave cloe's, an' lookin' jes' as sweet as pie. He walked right across dat flo', 'bout as fuh as from whar you is to 'bout whar dat chair's at, ah reck'n, an' he set down right by me. He looked ober at me kinda sweet like an' he axe me won' ah make 'im some coffee. Dat's ever' word he said. Co'se now, honey, dat skeered me, 'cause ah hadn' never see' nothin' like dat afo' an' ah jes' set dar an' ain' move. Den he look' at me kinda funny an' tole me to go on an' make dat coffee.

Ah went out to de kitchen and make a fiah; den ah look' back, an' 'fo' Gawd, dat man was plum GONE!"

"Has he ever been back to the house any more, Maggie?"

"Ah don' know'm. Ah lef' dat place nex' day an' ain' nevah been back. Ain' nobody else evah live' dah neither. But de boys says it's hanted. Ah don' know'm."

Mansfield, in Tarrant County, is far removed from Nacogdoches geographically, but the Negro belief in "hants" there differs none at all, so far as I have been able to observe, from the belief at Nacogdoches.

"Yes, honey, they sho' is hants, they sho' is! Don't let nobody tell you they ain't."

My informant was old Aunt Emma, my childhood "mammy," who now lives in a tiny cottage beside a road running into Mansfield. Her words were spoken in a somewhat querulous tone and with sundry movements of head and eyes. We had not talked long before I felt that I could safely question her as to whether the house my family once occupied was really haunted. When I recalled to her memory the fact that my father never encouraged his children to believe in ghosts, her compassion knew no bounds.

"Yes, honey chile, ah know yo' daddy allas was a awful funny man 'bout lots o' things, and didn't b'lieve in hants nur nothin'. But they sho' is hants jes' de same."

"Even yet, Aunt Emma?"

"Yes, honey lamb, jes' de same as they always was. Ah ain' see none now foh a long time but ah sho' used to see 'em. An' dat ve'y house you-all lived in out heah on de fahm was hanted, an' hanted bad. Ah used to think about you chil'en an' yo' ma stayin' dar by yo'selves when yo' pa was away, an' wonder ef you-all knowed dat ol' place was hanted."

When I confessed that I had often thought I heard strange noises there, the awful evidence came tumbling forth.

"Yes, ah don't wonder you heard 'em, lamb, 'cause they uz dar to heah! One time, when de ol' house stood up dar in de grove, whar it stood when Mr. Light hung hisself, and fo' you-all done move in it, ah stayed there one night when Mis' Light wuz gone and dey wan't nobody there but just me and my two li'l gals. An' 'way in de night we heard some'n bein' drug across de po'ch, soun' like a tree. It went on an' on dat away;

den it went 'round de house, an' back an' fo'th from dat ole well in de yahd."

"Were you scared, Aunt Emma?"

"Scared? Lawdy! Hit skeer de daylights out o' me an' dem chil'en."

"Why was the place haunted, Aunt Emma?"

"Well, ah don't know, honey, only dat so many folks has died there what wasn't ready to go, I reck'n."

Aunt Emma knew for certain of two more haunted houses—one near a graveyard; the other, the home of the former Senator Stephens. In this place the ghosts had taken many forms, but on one occasion had caused all the panic that even a ghost could desire by appearing, clad in the proverbial white, in the very center of a group of colored folk. It promenaded at length, carrying something in its hand; then, to their utter consternation, it leaped into the well!

Just outside the little town of Mansfield there stands today a house fallen to decay. At one time an old Negro man lived there alone. He was shot by an "ossifer of de law," I was told; and he died after a few days of awful suffering. His cries and moans for milk were heard by the terror-stricken dwellers around; but no one dared minister unto him in his dying agony. So there, alone and unbefriended, he fought his last fight, and his body was not touched for days after his death.

But his revenge has been complete; for as long as the house was occupied, the form of this departed one would keep regular nocturnal appointments with the milk pans. The Negro who told me of it had her news from one of the erstwhile occupants of the house; so of course there was no room for doubt. The woman had witnessed this strange scene more than once, but was never frightened by it at all—in fact, thought nothing about it! *Note:* She did not live there long.

A little farther out from Mansfield, on the same road, is a spot that has more pleasant associations. For here the winged horse went over, showering silver and chinaware from his aerial course. My authority for this statement could never be questioned, I am sure, for it is none other than the very respectable "Mrs. Pohtuh" (colored), who never was allowed to hear or believe in ghost stories, but who, nevertheless, managed to entertain three of us one afternoon until the setting of the December sun drove us home. From all the china which

she gathered up on that eventful day in her early childhood she preserved only one piece—a little cup. The gold letters forming the words “OUR PET” were a little indistinct, which fact was due, she assured me, to the swift passage of the fiery steed through the air.

### III. TALES

The following collection of tales was made by Chleo Carnes, a pupil in the Nacogdoches High School. Her informant was a young colored woman living in the mill district of the town. She looks so young, modern, and sophisticated that one would scarcely expect such “folky” tales from her.

#### THE HELL CHICKENS<sup>1</sup>

A man, the devil, lived in a large house with his two daughters, Martha and Sophrana. A man came along and told the devil that he wanted a wife. The devil said, “All right, I can fix you up. You may marry one of my daughters; but you must work seven years for her.”

The man wanted to marry Sophrana; so he set out to work seven years. When the seven years were up the man

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<sup>1</sup>The obstacle myth, as represented in “The Hell Chickens,” is common in the folk-lore of the Old World and is occasionally found among American Indians. For instance, George Bird Grinnell reports two Indian obstacle myths in the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, Vol. VI, pp. 44–47 and Vol. XVI, pp. 108–115. In the first story, “A Blackfoot Sun and Moon Myth,” the obstacles are a stick that becomes a forest, a stone that becomes a mountain, and water wrung from moss that becomes a “big water.” In the second story, “A Cheyenne Obstacle Myth,” the obstacles are yellow porcupine quills that become a bed of prickly pear, white quills that change into thorny bullberry bushes, red quills that become a thicket of thorny rose bushes, and a groove that widens into a chasm.

“The Bride of the Evil One,” *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, Vol. XII, pp. 126–130, is recorded as an old English folk-tale told by a Negro gardener in New Orleans. Maritta, daughter of a rich plantation family, married the Evil One and was taken to Torment. There an old hag, who had been the wife of the devil, gave her the means of escape: a brickbat that would become a wall, a turkey egg that would become a river, and a goose egg that would also become a river. In this story, two roosters were spies to the devil and were “pacified” by a bushel of corn.

See also *J. A. F. L.*, III, 202–203.—B. M. D.



called for his wife, and the devil told him that he must take Martha instead of Sophrana. The man refused and set out to work seven years more in order that he might wed Sophrana.

After the man had worked the seven years, again he called for his promised wife. The devil again answered him by telling him that he wanted him to marry Martha. When the devil refused to give him Sophrana, the man and Sophrana planned to steal away from the house without the devil's knowing it.

The devil had a large black hen and a rooster. They stood on each gate post to tell him when anyone left or came to the castle by way of the gate. The hen would take up for Sophrana, and the rooster would take up for his master, the devil. Sophrana knew that the rooster liked rice, and she gave him a half gallon of rice in order that she might make her escape while he was busy eating. Sophrana and the man slipped one of the devil's big black horses out and left.

As soon as the rooster had eaten the rice, he cried, "Sophrana's gone. Sophrana's gone. Sophrana's gone."

The hen, who was on Sophrana's side, said, "I think it is a shame and a scandal to lay three eggs a day and I can't get shoes to wear on my feet."

The rooster came back with, "That's a lie, that's a lie, that's a lie."

The hen began again, "I think it's a shame and a scandal to lay three eggs a day and can't get shoes to wear on my feet."

The devil heard the rooster's retort and got his horse and had a servant with him. They went in pursuit of Sophrana.

The couple saw that the devil was in pursuit of them and they hurried on. Sophrana said, "My father is pursuing me."

She had a bottle of water which she had brought with her and she poured it on the ground. The water began to grow until it was a mighty stream. The devil came to the stream and, as he is afraid of water, was unable to cross. He went up and down the side of the stream raging with anger. Finally he went to the end of the stream and went around it.

He was traveling with great swiftness, as well as Sophrana and the man, and soon he was near them again. Sophrana said, "My father is pursuing me."



She dropped a stone which she had with her and it began to grow until it got as big as a mountain. The devil came to the mountain and he could not get over it and he was greatly troubled to know how to get to the other side. After some time had been lost, he finally decided that he could go around.

He began to near the fleeing couple, and again Sophrana said, "My father is pursuing me."

She threw a piece of shrubbery and it began to grow until it was a vast briar thicket. When the devil came upon the thicket he was puzzled to know what to do to get on the other side of the thicket. He could not even drive his horse through the briars. He saw no other way but to go around; so he did that.

As he began to near the fleeing couple again, Sophrana said, "My father is pursuing me."

This time she threw down the Bible, which she had carried along. It fell on its back with its pages open. The Bible began to grow until it was as big as the sky. The devil was very much afraid of the Bible. He got up close to the Bible but saw no way to get by it. The sight of the Bible made him run back. He began to think how he wanted to pass, as Sophrana was almost out of sight because she was traveling so swiftly.

He made another effort to overtake her, but the sight of the Bible frightened him so that he ran back to the stream, fell in, and was drowned.

#### JOLLY BAKER AND THE DEVIL<sup>2</sup>

Jolly Baker was a terrible gambler. He gave his soul to the devil for a good time. He made an agreement with the devil and promised his soul to him after a certain number of years. When that time was up Jolly was not ready to go. The devil came and said, "I have come after you. Now your time is up."

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<sup>2</sup>Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, pp. 135-136, gives a variant of "Jolly Baker and the Devil." Here the man who sells his soul to the devil and then outwits him is named Jack. This is the Jack that became Jack-o'-lantern.—EDITOR.

Jolly Baker knew the devil was afraid of cards; so he said, "All right, devil, come and finish carding this bat for me while I step out and attend to some business before I go."

The devil took the cards, and began work. He suddenly stopped, and, looking at the cards, said, "Ten thousand teeth and no mouth, ten thousand teeth and no mouth." He became frightened and said, "Jolly Baker, if you will come and take this I will let you off ten more years."

Gladly Jolly Baker did so. Ten years sped by, Jolly Baker still living the ways of the devil. When the ten were up to the day, the devil was to make his second call. Jolly Baker again had to work some scheme to fool the devil, for he was still not ready to go. He knew that the devil was afraid of the spinning wheel.

The devil came and said, "Jolly Baker, come with me. Your time is up."

"Oh, Mr. Devil, I have some yarn I just must finish. Will you come and finish it for me while I tend to my business?"

The devil took his place at the spinning wheel. Jolly Baker busied himself about the room. The band slipped off the wheel and set it whirling and the devil's hand was caught. "Baker, come and get me loose and I will let you off ten more years."

Ten years sped by, while Jolly Baker continued to live the ways of the devil. When the ten were up to the day, the devil was to make his third call. Jolly Baker again had to work out some scheme to fool the devil, for he was still not ready to go.

The devil came and said, "Jolly Baker, come with me. Your time is up."

"Oh, Mr. Devil, I was just getting ready to sharpen my double bit axe, and I must do that before I go. I have a great deal of business to see to. Won't you come grind my double bit axe for me?"

So the devil took the double bit axe and lifted it to place it against the grindstone. But when he saw the edge coming up near his head as he bent over the grindstone, he was afraid that the axe would cut his head off. He started to put the axe down, but then he was afraid the axe would cut his feet off. He didn't know what to do. At last he called to Jolly Baker,

"Come take this double bit axe away from me and I'll never come after you again."

#### THE WITCH AND THE OVERSEERS<sup>3</sup>

There was a rich man whose name was Mr. West. He was the owner of 150 slaves and was considered to be very wealthy. He had a wife and two daughters, and they dressed in the finest of clothes and wore the finest jewelry.

Now Mr. West always kept an overseer to work his slaves. He always had a good man for this job and paid him about twelve hundred dollars a year, but it got so that no overseer could hold his job for more than a year. There was something peculiar about the matter, as you will see. Mr. West got to be mightily disturbed about how things were running. He always hired his overseer on New Year's Eve. The overseer would begin work at once and never did an overseer fail to finish the year successfully. Each year the overseer after the year's work would go to bed on Christmas Eve hale and hearty, and each year Christmas morning would find him dead. No one knew what happened to them, but for four years hand-running Mr. West's overseers had ended up just that way.

One day right after Christmas a man came along and asked the plantation owner for employment as an overseer.

Mr. West answered, "I am thoroughly disgusted with hiring overseers. Within four years I have hired four overseers and every one of them did nicely all the year and went to bed well on Christmas Eve only to be found dead the next morning."

"But I am not afraid to try it. Really I am anxious for the position," the man said.

"Well, if you are so willing to run the risk, you come over to the office and sign up." Mr. West had his office out in the yard, not far from the house.

Mr. West showed the new overseer, Mr. Westly, his house, which was built in the back yard. Mr. Westly made a splendid

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<sup>3</sup>This tale of a woman transformed into a cat, involving as it does so much of belief in witchcraft and metamorphosis, has appeared in many forms in many places. Inferior variants of it are recorded in the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XII, 68; XXX, 196; XXXIV, 9; XXXV, 283-284. See also N. N. Puckett's *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, 149.—B. M. D.

overseer and everything went as nice and smooth as could be for a year.

Christmas Eve night Mr. Westly sat in his room reading the Bible. He read the Bible often. He thought of what his employer told him always happened on Christmas Eve night; so he got his sword out, laid it across his lap, and continued to read. He had been reading quite a while when he heard a cat outside the door, "Meouw."

"Come in, kitty," he said, and the cat walked in. "Does the kitty want some bread and butter?" The cat ate the buttered bread, then wandered about the room, and then finally sat down.

A younger voice was heard at the door, "Meouw."

"Come in," called the old cat while Westly continued to read.

"Who said so?" inquired the younger.

"Westly," she answered.

The younger cat came in and after walking about the room a minute took its place by the older. Westly paid them no attention but continued to read.

Another "meouw" was heard outside the door, which came from another cat.

"Come in," called the oldest cat, Westly still reading.

"Who said so?" asked the younger.

"Westly," was the reply of the oldest cat.

The young cat came in and made herself at home with the other two. The old cat got up, yawned, and gave a long stretch and walked slowly about the room. She acted as if she was looking for a mouse. After a while she threw her forefeet upon the table near Westly, as if she intended to jump upon it.

Westly took his sword and cut off both her feet. He had been watching her actions very cautiously. When he did this, she and the other two cats vanished. The cat paws on the table instantly turned into two beautiful white lady's hands, adorned with gorgeous rings. He continued to read in the Bible until daylight.

Early next morning Mr. West came to the door, dreading to ask about his overseer, and fearfully knocked. He was proud when he heard the overseer answer, "Come in."

When the man had entered the room, Westly asked, "Do you know these hands?"

"No, but I know those rings. I can swear to that one," he said, as he pointed to the engagement ring that he had placed on his wife's finger. "How come you with them?"

Westly then told West of how the cats came and how the oldest one acted. He told how he cut off the paws, which proved to be the hands, without doubt, of Mr. West's wife.

"Well, I'm going right upstairs to see," said West, very much excited. When he got up stairs he found his wife and two daughters all in the same bed and asked them what the trouble might be; but none of the three dared to talk. He tried to pull the cover off but they would not let him. He hurried off and got some officers and found that his wife had both her hands cut off and that both the daughters were beheaded. When anything happened to the mother, it affected them all.

Everybody knew then that the wife and daughters were witches and that they were the three cats that had been to Westly's room. Mr. West said, "That's just what has been going on all these years without my understanding it."

They decided that the old cat had a poisoned claw and that when she was climbing on the table her intention was to stick it in Westly and kill him as she had killed the four other overseers.



## THE GHOSTS OF LAKE JACKSON

BY BERTHA MCKEE DOBIE

Old Alf ran his fingers vigorously through his hair in his characteristic gesture of reminiscence. I had asked whether he had ever heard that the old house at Lake Jackson Plantation, ten miles up the Brazos from Velasco, was haunted. He answered my question in his own oblique way.

"Le's see," he said, "it wus fo' year atter freedom dat Marse Sam done lef' t'ree hunderd bales ob cotton in de fiel' in Waller County, an' we all come postin' down to de Wha'ton Plantation to make sugar. Eve'y t'ing down heah wus sugar in dem days. Co'se de Wha'ton place all cut up now, but in dem days it run plum up ter Lake Jackson.

"Ol' Cunnel Jackson been dead long year befo' dat en de gran' ol' house seen trouble a-plenty. Oh, I dunno *how* big de Lake Jackson Plantation wus, but I knows dey wuk six er seben hunderd niggers dere atter Ward and Dewey tuk de place in 1873, an' I done go ter wuk fer 'em in '76 longer a lot er udder free niggers.<sup>1</sup> Dat wus atter Marse Sam done go out

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<sup>1</sup>Ward and Dewey contracted with the state for convict labor, which they supplemented with "free niggers."

to Californy. I dunno how big it wus, but it wus awfu', awfu'. He wus a highty-tighty man, de Cunnel wus, en mighty proud er all his lan' en dat big, fine house. I dunno how many rooms it had, but dere wus a worril ob 'em, en de postes on de front gall'ry wus dat big aroun'. Oh, dey wus big an' fine, en de house look gran' eben dough when I see it it been gwine rack en ruin fer years. Dere wus a roun' tower, what some folks calls a cubola, on top, en it wus glass all roun', en dey say dat when de Cunnel was alibe he useter go up dere ev'y ev'nin en look out ober his lan' fur's he could see. En dey say dat eber since dat time he comes back ev' en'nin' en look out ober de lan'. I dunno 'bout dat. I ain't seed him. But da's w'at dey say. De cubola had one o' dem weader fixin's on de tiptop of it. It stayed dere untel de sto'm ob '75.

"Dat wus de wretchedes' fambly wid wunner nudder, allus in a scrummage. You done year how Mr. George kill Mr.

John, ain't you? Ober de prob'ty, it wus. Mr. George wus arrange fer to hab de place at Sandy Point, en he want Lake Jackson. I's seed de spot where Mr. John fell mo'n once. You knows dat if a man is pick up fum de place where he fall when he shot, de rains wash out de blood an' de grass grow green, but if he die where he fall it stay dark like blood to de end ob time en no rain wash it out. Dat sho is de bressed truf, en da's de way where Mr. John die atter Mr. George shoot him. Mr. George lose his min' atter w'ile. Look like it gnaw on his min' w'at he done. Dey wus allus in a perdiction, dose Jacksons. 'Pear like dey jes' bawn dat away. Mr. Andrew kill hisse'f accidental crawlin' t'rough a fence when he wus out huntin'. En all dat calamity fambly ain't neber get no rest. One night I sleep in de house on an ol' sofy. Dere wa'n't no win' stirrin' no way you'd look. But de do's kep' op'nin' en shettin' en a-slammin' en a-bangin' en I year all dat onres'less fambly walkin' up en down all ober de house, jes' like I tell you. But I so tired dat night I don' care 'bout nothin' no more 'cep'n' rest, en I rise up on my elbow en say, 'It take a libe man t'row me out dis night!'"

## HOW MR. POLECAT GOT HIS SCENT

BY KATE STONER O'CONNOR

The following tale was told in my kitchen to Tom, Jr., by Uncle Barnes, an old negro man who looked remarkably like the pictures of Uncle Remus, and who, when asked his age, replied, "Well, I mus' be somewhar 'long 'bout a hunderd, 'cause I was 'bout the size of yer little boy dar when freedom come." Uncle Barnes said that his pappy used to tell this tale and many others like it to him "en de little white boys on old Marse Sterne's place, fo' de wah."

"Lawsy, chile, ain't you never heared how Mr. Polecat got his scent? It was like dis. Mr. Man had a fine gahden, but he kept er-missin' his charlottes [shallots] out o' de bed. So he made up his mine to find de ole thief; so heah's how he done it. He took an' sot him a trap, one o' dese heah box-traps whut you props up wid er stick and you ketches de animal alive.

"Well, nex' mornin' Mr. Man he comes out, and dar's anudder big hole in his charlotte bed. He goes over, an' he looks in his trap and dar sets ole Br'er Rabbit in it jest as spry an' sassy as eber.

"'Now,' say Mr. Man, 'I done ketched yer, yer thief, and I'se gwine skin you right now an' fry you fo' breakfas'.

"Br'er Rabbit he say: 'Wait, Mr. Man. Day's some mistake heah. I ain't de thief. I uz just a-passin' fru dis heah patch when dis heah contrapsion falled on me. But if you'll let me out, I kin sho' show you de thief.'

"So Mr. Man helt up his skinnin' knife and says, 'Well, show him me quick den.'

"Br'er Rabbit says: 'See dat black cat moseyin' ober dar by de fence? Dat dar fellow wid de big white stripe down his back and de big bushy tail helt ober his back—he's de thief.'

"Mr. Man turnt Br'er Rabbit loose an' grabbed de cat, when—Whu-wee!"

Here Uncle Barnes grabbed his nose, ducked his head between his knees, and shook it from side to side.

“My! Chile alive, what a smell dat cat let loose! Br’er Rabbit jumped up and lit out hollerin’, ‘Dar now, dar now, didn’t I tell you? Just smell what a bad bref dat cat’s got from eatin’ so many charlottes!’ ”

## DE POT-SONG

BY PALMER A. THROOP

My grandmother's cook, a former slave, at Anderson, in Grimes County, once told me this tale when I was a little boy, watching the oatmeal bubble on the stove.

Texas nigger didn't have to stay on one planteration all de time lessen he want to. Lord, no! Too many big woods to run aroun' in. Sometimes de soup git moughty thin and de rations moughty measly on some planterations. Den a nigger git up an' leave. He hide in de woods fo' a spell, den he slip arcun' to de kitchen of anudder planteration just 'bout supper time. He stick he haid in de do' an' listen to de pot-song. Ef'n de pot sing "Z-z-z-z-z," nigger says, "Leave dis trash alone; I done heared dat water-song too long already." Den he take to de woods agin tell de nex' night. 'Long 'bout supper time, he stick he haid in anudder do' an' listen to de pot-song. Ef'n de pot sing, "Flippity-flop, flippity-flop," nigger say, "Dat chune sho' got a sight of water in hit." So he up'n take to de woods agin tell de nex' night. 'Long 'bout supper time, he stick he haid in anudder do' an' listen to de pot-song. Ef'n de pot sing slow and puffin', "Ker-plop . . . ker-plop . . . ker-plop," nigger say, "Lord! Dar's *my* chune; dat pot-song say, 'Thick an' plenty, thick an' plenty.'"

About the same time that I heard the tale of the pot-song, I was in the habit of playing with a darky boy who liked to chant in the dark, to scare me, the following rhyme:

Did you ever see de devil  
Wid he ol' wooden shovel  
Come a-tearin' up de groun'  
Wid he big toe-nail?



## NOTES ON SOME RECENT TREATMENTS OF NEGRO FOLK-LORE

BY ROBERT ADGER LAW

Two movements are discernible in current literature concerning the Negro race. One, chiefly sociological, might be termed "the uplift movement"; the other, largely folk-loristic, may be called "the back to nature movement." The two are well illustrated in a modest, entertaining little volume issued during the past year by the University of North Carolina Press under the title *Congaree Sketches*. Its author, Dr. E. C. L. Adams, is a professional man of Columbia, South Carolina, and his aim is evidently to present a number of representative tales in Negro dialect to illustrate the life and thought of actual Negroes settled in the rural communities along the Congaree River not far from his home.

Now this book contains a somewhat lengthy introduction by Paul Green, a professor of sociology in the University of North Carolina, better known perhaps as the author of "In Abraham's Bosom," the Pulitzer Prize play of 1926. Those who have read the play or any other from that author's pen will realize that Mr. Green, a native white North Carolinian, is tremendously stirred by the social and political sins of the white man against his black brother. His is a voice crying in the wilderness, "Repent ye." Naturally, he cannot think of the Negro without calling on the white race to lend a helping hand to the colored people struggling below them in the ditch. That is exactly what Mr. Green does, but his introduction is strangely out of tone with the sketches that he introduces.

The sketches tell of Negro life in the present world and the world to come, all from the standpoint of the Congaree Negro, who gives them in his own dialect, usually without explanation or apology. Naturally the tales contain large elements of humor, superstition, and crude philosophy; indirectly they convey not a little information as to the Negro's social life. But there is no attempt to teach any lesson or to right any wrong. Dr. Adams merely draws the thing as he sees it for the God of Things as They Are.

For example, there is the Negro who went to heaven, was given angel's wings, and at once began planning a "tonement" in which all the black and the white angels should fly. But he grew too ambitious, and came to disaster, "zackly lak a nigger, des ezackly lak a nigger." Other Negroes suffer punishment in the world beyond for their sins in this one, while not a few are punished in the white man's court with scarcely even-handed justice.

Most interesting of these tales from the standpoint of folk-lore is one which tells of a Negro damsel who ate the two ducks that her father had prepared for his preacher guest, but escaped from detection by first explaining to the guest that her father made a habit of cutting off visiting preachers' ears, and then admonishing her father, after the guest had run out of the house, that he had taken with him both fowls. Now, as one of my students has kindly pointed out to me, this story is merely a variant of "The Clever Grethel," which forms No. 77 of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* of the Brothers Grimm. But in Grimms' version Grethel is a servant, not a member of the host's family, and the guest is not of the clerical profession. In both these particulars the tale given by Adams is nearer to an older version of the same story.<sup>1</sup> Yet the coloring of the narrative is entirely of the Negro, as is also the phrasing of the moral: "And de ole tales tell you dat womens has always been sharper dan mens."

Of much the same general purport as *Congaree Sketches*, though a more ambitious volume, is the late A. E. Gonzales' *With Æsop Along the Black Border*, published in Columbia by the State Company, 1924. This book is in certain senses a companion volume to the same author's previous collection of Negro sketches, *The Black Border*, published two years earlier. But *The Black Border* gives its stories from the white man's standpoint, stories involving Governor Aiken and Governor Heyward, the Walterboro jail, and the main-traveled roadbed of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway. The later collection, however, comprises only Negro versions of Æsop's tales. The dialect of both books is distinctly different

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, ed. Bolte and Polivka (Leipzig, 1915), II, 129-131.

from that of *Congaree Sketches* in that it is the lingo, not of the Congaree district, but of Negroes living along the Carolina seacoast, locally known as Gullah. On first acquaintance Æsop in Gullah is scarcely recognizable, but in time we grow familiar with old favorites: "The Fox Who Lost His Tail," "The Lion and the Mouse," "The Dog in the Manger," and "The Fighting Cocks and the Eagle." In the telling we recognize characteristic Ethiopian touches, sometimes suspiciously artful so that we suspect the white artist.

Here, for instance, is the conclusion of "The Eagle and the Jackdaw": "Gawd pit load 'puntop all him creetuh 'cawd'n' to dem strengk. Him nebbuh 'spec' him Jackdaw fuh fly off wid no sheep. Ef man hab weak sperrit, de Lawd load 'um light, but ef 'e h'aa't strong, Him load 'um hebby. En', 'stead'uh grunt, 'cause de load bow 'e back, da' man ought'uh t'engklful 'cause Gawd trus' 'um. De load haffuh tote, enty? Berry well."<sup>2</sup> And the Lion replies to the Ass dressed in the Lion's skin: "Yaas, budduh, Uh know berry well who you iz! Uh might'uh bin skayre, meself, ef Uh didn' bin yeddy you bray."<sup>3</sup> These changes are fine illustrations of the habit of the folk in oral tradition.

Two works of pure fiction which have attracted attention within the past few years to the possibilities of the South Carolina Negro as a subject for the novelist are DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* (1925) and Julia Peterkin's *Black April* (1927). Unlike the books just treated, neither one of these narratives pretends to be a truthful account of the Negro's lore in his own language, but both are products, written largely in dialect, of genuine Negro folk-lore at work in the novel.

Mrs. Peterkin's hero might easily have appeared in *Congaree Sketches*, though he is a man of more intelligence than most of the characters that Dr. Adams has drawn. He is the Negro foreman of a large South Carolina plantation in the same section of the state. Scarcely a white man appears in the book and the Negroes can live their own life, treat their own sick, patch their own quarrels, prepare and eat their own meals, without much thought of interference by the white race.

<sup>2</sup>Gonzales, *Æsop Along the Black Border*, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 217.

Big Sue leans over a grave to say: "I want seven li'i' rocks now. One fo' ev'y night in de week. I gwine keep 'em tie up in my pocket hankcher, so I would stop havin' so much bad dreams all de time."<sup>4</sup> On another occasion Big Sue, probably the most superstitious person in the book, seeing a rabbit cross her path, exclaims: "Do, Jedus! Lawd! Dat rabbit went leftward. A bad luck t'ing! Put dem t'ings down! Chunk two sticks behind 'em."<sup>5</sup> The book is a veritable treasure-trove for one who is interested in listing such beliefs, and from personal experience I can testify that many of them are common property.

If from the standpoint of the folk-lorist *Porgy* is less valuable than any of the three books discussed, treating, as it does, a community of city-bred Negroes, more sophisticated in their outlook upon the present world, nevertheless it is the best written story of the four, and its charm lies largely in its treatment of folk customs, folk beliefs, and folk music. It has for its hero a crippled negro beggar; its setting is, not a place in rural Carolina, but a Negro district in the City of Charleston, metropolis of South Carolina, unnamed but very thinly disguised. These Negroes, sharing some of the advantages of city life, are in most respects far removed from the whites, and especially suspicious of any white officer of the law. Hence they live and move amid much the same atmosphere as pervades the other three volumes.

Expression of such beliefs is frequent throughout the book, as: "De las' man in de grabe-yahd goin' tuh be de nex' one git buried."<sup>6</sup> So believing, all attendants on a funeral service scramble over each other to escape from the cemetery immediately after the burial. And when rain follows, the friends of the deceased Negro sigh with relief: "Dat's all right now fer Robbins. . . . Gawd done sen' he rain already fuh wash he feet-steps offen dis eart."<sup>7</sup> The most tragic incident of the whole story occurs when Porgy, unsuspected of a murder that he has committed under severe provocation, is ordered by white men to view and identify the body of his victim in the

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>*Black April*, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1927, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>7</sup>*Porgy*, George H. Doran Co., New York, 1925, p. 32.



presence of the coroner's court. "I gots tuh go an' look on Crown' face wid all dem w'ite folks lookin' at me. Dat it?" After attempted reassurance by the constable, he again asks, "Dey ain't goin' be no nigger in dat room 'cept me?" Finally, "I couldn't jus' bring a 'oman wid me? I couldn't eben carry my—my 'oman?"<sup>8</sup> Final refusal forces the cripple to defy the court and attempt flight in his goat-cart, resulting in a jail sentence for contempt that finally breaks up his home.

But the outstanding impression of beauty that seems to be left on New York audiences attending the stage version of *Porgy* comes from the spirituals taken over from the book:

"Take dis man an' gone—gone.  
Death, ain't yuh gots no shame?"

"What yuh goin' ter do when yuh come out de wilderness,  
Leanin' on my Lord?"

"Oh, between de eart' an' sky,  
I kin see my Sabior die."

Now I am informed on the best authority that these very spirituals are sung commonly at Negro funerals and other church services in Texas today.

What has been attempted in this paper is not to follow the whole course of recent developments in Negro folk-lore, but by drawing on four books from one Southern state, to exemplify the growing recognition of such study. When one looks back to the earlier work of Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris in the use of the Negro dialect and Negro characters in story form, one must recognize in these modest sketches a more serious effort to portray the Negro as he talks, as he thinks, and as he is. A comparison of the dialects employed would show vast differences among them all, but the differences actually exist in different portions of the same small state. The net result is that these four writers have attained a degree of reality in their separate portrayals that Page, at least, never dreamed of in his delightful but wholly romanticized world. What these four authors have done is to set down genuine folk-lore, and to make their heroes and heroines behave "ezackly lak a nigger."

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.



## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF COWBOY SONGS

BY NEWTON GAINES

At intervals during my boyhood I was precipitated into the midst of five healthy youngsters on a certain ranch in the Big Bend country of West Texas. Upon the morning after one such precipitation in my tenth year, sore of muscle and bone and sunburned on my face, neck, and short-panted legs, I complained to my mother, "I can't stand up and I can't sit down and I can't lie down. What am I going to do!" It was during these tastes of the raw, vigorous life on horseback or about campfire that I came to know and to love the cowboy song.

A few years ago I asked a prominent musician what he thought of the cowboy song. "There is nothing distinctive about it," he replied. "The skilled musician can see in each tune merely the revamping of some older printed song, and the words as a rule are crude and meaningless to me."

Upon questioning him further, I found out that he had never heard the songs sung on a ranch, on trail, or in a cattle camp, but that encores by concert singers, "close harmony" songs by college clubs, and printed editions of cowboy songs distorted to make them salable were his only sources of opinion. Within the last few years we have all heard a distorted version of the most used of night-herding songs set to an accompaniment imitative of cathedral bells!

I am confident that there is in the cowboy song something distinctive and different from any other spontaneous song product of a people. During the heyday of the cowboy song, the seventies and eighties, in the West and Southwest, the Anglo-Saxon was experiencing a form of pastoral life his race had never experienced before, the form in which vast herds are driven long distances. Certainly his reaction to this new experience, expressed in song, should be expected to have combinations of qualities never heard before in the folk-singing of his people.

The most outstanding quality of these songs, to me, is the rhythm. This rhythm is almost always that of the Western horse; I have discovered and am able to differentiate three

different rhythms and only three, the three gaits of the overwhelming majority of our Texas horses—the walk, the trot, and the lope. The average descendant of the wild mustang offered his master for ordinary travel only the walk, the trot, and the lope. Why are the pace, the single-foot, and other fancy gaits absent? If you've ever had much to do with the ordinary Texas horse, you understand.

There is today on the market much sheet music styled cowboy songs, in the melody of which, even with the most earnest effort, one cannot detect the rhythm of the horse. Indeed we find the mark of Broadway, or even *In Deutschland gemacht*, stamped all through such songs. The real cowboy had to use horse rhythm in his singing; it was the rhythm of his working day in the saddle. He had to sing to the motion of his horse—or get the breath knocked out of him. The very essence of his style of riding is to make himself a part of the horse.

It is true that the music of the cowboy song can usually be traced by the expert musician to some popular song of the seventies and eighties or to some Irish or English broadside brought direct by some of that multitude of young men attracted by the adventurous life of opportunity said to be found on the American cattle range. Yet in almost every case, one finds that the cowboys have altered the rhythm and melody to suit their pioneer experiences and feelings, of which the song is the expression. Now this is not to the discredit of the Western singer; students of the evolution of music tell us that the parentage of most tunes among any particular people can be so traced. There are some melodies among the cowboy songs, however, that I believe have sprung direct from our Western soil. For instance, I think that the tune of the familiar "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," though the words are an adaptation of an old sea ballad, is imitative of the night noises of the prairie, the yelp of the coyote bearing the burden.<sup>1</sup>

A second characteristic of the cowboy song is its freeness of expression. Its singers were usually young bachelors—and "a long way from home." Today, the husband with grey hair about his temples who sings with his wife,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the music of the original song, "The Ocean Burial," as printed in *Texas and Southwestern Lore* (Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society for 1927), pp. 177-180.—EDITOR.

"Darling, I am growing old,  
Silver threads among the gold,"

if he were possessed of the veracious spirit of the buckaroo,  
would sing instead,

"Darling, I am growing bold,  
And am getting hard to hold."

The cowboy, regardless of calendar age, was a boy at heart. He was interested in his own experiences, actual and imaginary; and so a third characteristic of most of his songs is a persistent use of the first person. For the pronoun *they* as it occurs in his songs, one may usually substitute *we* with propriety. Take, for instance, the last verse of the familiar "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie":

And the cowboys now as they roam the plain—  
For they marked the spot where his bones were lain—  
Spread a handful of roses o'er his grave,  
With a prayer to Him who his soul will save.

In this song, the cowboy may unconsciously substitute *we* for *they* and sing the verse thus:

And the cowboys now as we roam the plain—  
For we marked the spot where his bones were lain—  
Spread a handful of roses o'er his grave,  
With a prayer to Him who his soul will save.

(By the way, please notice that in this song, which is a typical night-herding song, the rhythm is that of a walk, the usual gait of the cowboy when on guard at night.)

Last summer I tried out some of my day-herding songs on a cowman who has spent forty-five years at the trade. His criticism was, "You sing the verses too loud." Ninety-nine per cent of a cowboy's singing was done with no one around. His night-herding songs, of course, were always a croon; loud singing would have had a disquieting rather than a lulling effect upon the cattle. The day-herd songs, which evolved from monotonous yells at the cattle, with purpose of keeping them in motion, accumulated verses sung softly by the rider to himself with the staccato yell breaking forth at intervals to supply the necessary urge to the moving column of

steers. When you hear a verse of a cowboy song delivered with force, you may be sure that it is not being delivered in the manner true. This soft singing of the verses I believe to be a fourth characteristic of cowboy singing.

A fifth characteristic of cowboy songs is a spirit of democracy. The habit of Anglo-Saxon men following the business of handling cattle is to look every man in the face, confident that a man's own worth rather than accident of birth, education, or inheritance determines his standing. This is the spirit that has permeated the great plains country from the Mississippi to the Rockies, from South Texas to Canada. The spirit grew most rapidly during the cattle driving decades, following the Civil War, that brought about the mingling of Northern and Southern peoples all over the trans-Mississippi country. And so when I find in a purported cowboy song a verse with a patronizing ring I doubt its authenticity.

I shall now give some ranch songs illustrative of the distinctive characteristics I have enumerated. I wish to here thank Mr. Carl Fehr, of Austin, for transcribing the tunes for me.

#### GIT ALONG, LITTLE DOGIES<sup>2</sup>

"Git Along, Little Dogies" is a day-herding song intended to keep the cattle going. It evolved, I believe, from the ordinary monotonous yells like "Ho—ho—ho—ho—ho." The tune, which I got some fifteen years ago from a South Texas cowboy and which differs somewhat from that recorded by Mr. Lomax, evidently grew out of an air brought over from Ireland. But notice the adaptation of the rhythm to the lope of the Western horse.

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<sup>2</sup>For a complete version of the song, with music, see *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, by John A. Lomax, pp. 87-91.



*Rhythm: "The Lope of a Horse"*  
*Sing Verses Softly; Shout the Yells*

A walk-in' the streets of La-re-do, I spied a cow-  
puncher all rid-in' a-lone. His hat was thrown back and his  
spurs were a-jingle, And he ap-proached me a-sing-in this song:  
*Chorus:* Whoopee ti yi yo, git a-long, lit-tle dogies, It's your mis-  
for-tune and none of my own. Whoopee ti yi yo, git a-  
long, lit-tle dogies, For you know Wy-o-ming will be your new home.

A-walkin' the streets of Laredo,  
I spied a cowpuncher all ridin' alone.  
His hat was throwed back and his spurs were a-jingle  
And he approached me a-singing this song:

*Chorus:* "Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies.  
It's your misfortune and none of my own.  
Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies,  
For you know Wyoming will be your new home."

### THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL<sup>3</sup>

Another typical trail song, but to the rhythm of an easy trot—though "easy" is a word that cannot very frequently be applied to that gait of the American cow pony—is "The Old Chisholm Trail." In this song, as will be illustrated by the singing of a few verses, we have the rise and fall of youthful enthusiasm, say of a boy of about seventeen, who has gone west to get a start. Notice the frequent use of the first personal pronoun.

<sup>3</sup>Words and variant music in Lomax, 58-63.



*Rhythm: "Trotting Horse"*

With a ten dol-lar horse and a forty dollar saddle, Ki yi yooopi, yooopi

ya, I'm go-in' to punch-in Tex-as cat-tle, Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya,

*Chorus:* Ki yi yooopi, yooopi ya, yooopi ya ya, Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya.

- 1 With a ten dollar horse and a forty dollar saddle,  
Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya,  
I'm goin' to punchin' Texas cattle,  
Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya,
- Chorus:* Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya, yooopi ya ya,  
Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya.
- 2 A-settin' in the saddle, my hand on the horn,  
Best damned cowboy that ever was born.
- 3 Cloudy in the west and a-lookin' like rain,  
And my blamed old slicker's in the wagon again.
- 4 Last night I was on guard and the leader broke the ranks,  
I hit my horse down the shoulders and I spurred him in the flanks.
- 5 I herded and I hollowed and I done pretty well,  
'Til the boss said, "Boys, just let 'em go to hell."
- 6 Oh, it's bacon and beans 'most every day,  
I'd as soon be a-eatin' prairie hay.
- 7 I went to the boss to get my roll,  
He had it figgered out I was nine dollars in the hole.
- 8 Goin' to sell my hoss and my forty dollar saddle,  
Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya,  
I'll punch no more of these long-horn cattle,  
Ki yi yooopi yooopi ya.

*Chorus:*

Professor Hubbard, an expert in Indian tribal customs, member of the faculty of the University of Colorado, told me upon hearing the above song that doubtless that yell was bor-

rowed by the cowboy from the Kiowa or associated tribes during passage of the herds through the Indian reservations.

In Chicago one evening, I sang the song to Dr. Spessard, teacher of biology by profession and musician in his recreations; and he called my attention to the fact that the tune is an adaptation of that popular tune of the day by Stephen Foster, "Old Uncle Ned." But it is evident that the cowboy singers unconsciously twisted melody and rhythm to suit the experiences of the herdsman on the plains.

### THE TRAIL OF '83

Typical night-herding songs are "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" and "The Trail of '83." The first has already been spoken of. The melody and words of the second are of my own collecting,<sup>4</sup> having been learned from a friend of mine in Fort Worth, Mr. J. C. Buford, who was brought up near Big Spring, Texas. The theme of this maundering song parallels in an uncouth way that of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall." It is the story of a young cowboy engaged to a cattle buyer's daughter, which young man the cattleman removed from the scene of action by subterfuge. Notice the rhythm is that of a walking horse.

*Rhythm: "The Walk of the Horse"*  
*Sung in the Maundering Manner*

I made up my mind to change my way, To leave my crowd that was so gay, No  
long-er in Tex-as to stay for a while, But travel west for ma-ny a mile.

*Chorus: Little Faster*

Co-ma ti yi yi co-ma ti yi ya, Co-ma ti yi yoopee ti yi ya.

- 1 I made up my mind to change my way,  
To leave my crowd that was so gay,  
No longer in Texas to stay for a while  
But travel west for many a mile.

<sup>4</sup>See Lomax, 132-135 (no music). Sandburg, *American Songbag*, 285-286, gives music. Cox, J. H., *Folk-Songs of the South*, 358, gives a very interesting history of the song.—EDITOR.

- 2 It was in the fall of '83  
That J. P. Stanley hired me.  
He said, "Young man, I want you to go  
And take a herd to New Mexico."
- 3 Oh, it was early in the year  
When I went on trail to drive those steers,  
To leave my darling girl behind  
Who had oft-times told me her heart was mine.
- 4 When I embraced her in my arms,  
Seemed she like ten thousand charms  
With cheeks so red and lips so sweet,  
Sayin', "We'll get married when next we meet."
- 5 It was a long and lonesome go  
To take that herd to Mexico,  
But the music sweet of the cowboy's song  
To New Mexico our herd moved on.
- 6 When I arrived in New Mexico  
I wanted to see her but I could not go.  
I wrote one letter to my love so dear,  
But not one word could I ever hear.
- 7 When I returned to my once loved home  
Inquirin' for the darling of my soul,  
They said, "She's married to a richer life,  
Therefore, young man, seek another wife."
- 8 Of curse to gold and silver, too!  
What account is a girl who won't prove true?  
I'll cut my way to the far off land  
And go back to the cowboy band.
- 9 Oh, buddy, oh, buddy, please stay at home,<sup>4a</sup>  
Don't be forever on the roam.  
There's many a girl much truer than she;  
Oh, buddy, don't go where the bullets fly.
- 10 The girl has married that I adore,  
I'll stay at home no never more,  
But in my saddle I will ride out  
And throw them longhorns 'round and about.

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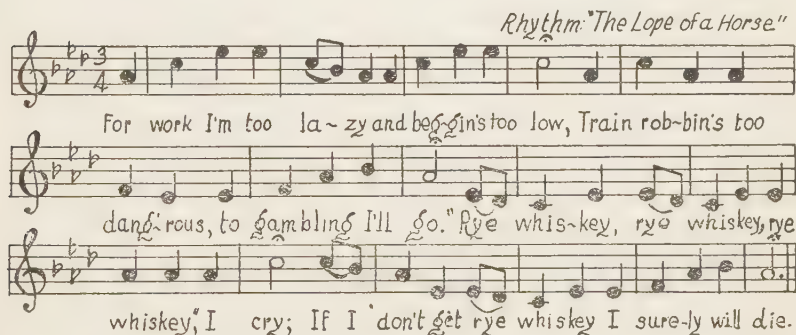
<sup>4a</sup>The last two stanzas are not conversation between brother and sister, as some critic has contended, but are addressed to a fellow cowboy and are giving him advice after the manner of the much traveled soldier in Kipling's "The Ladies."

*Chorus:* Coma ti yi yi  
 Coma ti yi ya  
 Coma ti yi yoopee  
 Ti yi ya!

This final outburst, of course, was discreetly omitted if the rider was on night herd.

## RYE WHISKEY

In conclusion, I offer a version of "Rye Whiskey" learned last summer on a ranch. Very different versions of this song are found in the Kentucky mountains and in the wooded areas of Missouri under the name "Corn Whiskey."<sup>5</sup> I learned the song from a friend who sang it only on rare occasions, and have not tried to unlearn his peculiarities of rendition. A better title for "Rye Whiskey," I think, would be "The Roving Bachelor"; a thirst for liquor is not the only urge present.



- 1 For work I'm too lazy and beggin's too low,  
 Train robbin's too dangerous,  
 To gamblin' I'll go.

*Chorus:* "Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, rye whiskey," I cry,  
 "If I don't git rye whiskey, I surely will die."

<sup>5</sup>The song has been printed in various places under various titles. Lomax, pages 292-296, gives a version of it (with music) under the title of "Jack o' Diamonds." Perhaps no other song has been more often blended with other songs. My own version is evidently blended somewhat with "Old Paint" (Lomax, 329-330).

- 2 Sometimes I drink whiskey, sometimes I drink wine,  
Ten thousand o' bottles  
I've killed in my time.
- 3 I'm a-ridin' Ol' Paint, I'm a-leadin' Ol' Dan,  
Goodbye, my gentle Annie,  
I'm off for Cheyenne.
- 4 The last time I saw her was late in the fall,  
She was swingin' on a corner  
At a masquerade ball.
- 5 I've no wife to quarr'l with, no babies to bawl,  
The best way of livin'  
Is no wife at all.



# MORE BALLADS AND SONGS OF THE FRONTIER FOLK

BY J. FRANK DOBIE

In *Texas and Southwestern Lore* (the publication of the Texas Folk-Lore Society for 1927) I contributed an article entitled "Ballads and Songs of the Frontier Folk." In this article, containing some thirty songs, I made certain general observations that will apply to song material I have since collected and now publish. For transcribing the music of these songs I am grateful to Carl A. Fehr, of Austin.

## I. SONGS OF HISTORICAL PURPORT

### MRS. WILLIAMS' LAMENTATION

I shall not be so categorical as to assert absolutely that "Mrs. Williams' Lamentation" was the first popular song of home composition that the Texas colonists sang and recited; but it is the earliest that I have discovered. The song and its history throw considerable light on the social life of Austin's "Three Hundred."

Either late in 1827 or early in 1828 Noah Smithwick arrived in San Felipe de Austin on the Brazos River, the capital of Austin's colony. His memoirs comprise a most illuminating book on the nature and customs of the early colonists.<sup>1</sup> He found the settlers as resourceful in having their song and dance as they were in other matters. For instance when Mose, "the only fiddler around," failed to appear at a dance the merry folk "called in an old darkey belonging to Colonel Zeno Philips, who performed on a clevis as an accompaniment to his singing, while another Negro scraped on a cotton hoe with a case knife. The favorite chorus was:

O git up, gals, in de mawnin',  
O git up, gals, in de mawnin',  
O git up, gals, in de mawnin',  
Jes' at de break ob day,

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<sup>1</sup>*The Evolution of a State, or Recollections of Old Texas Days*, by Noah Smithwick (nonagenarian), Austin, Texas, 1900, pp. 40-41, 80-81.

at the conclusion of which the performer gave an extra blow to the clevis while the dancers responded with a series of dexterous rat-tat-tats with heel and toe."

"Nor," says Smithwick, "were these San Felipeans indifferent to the claims of genius. The first public function after my arrival in the town [was] a demonstration in honor of a local bard, in which the distinguished gentleman, after having been made the recipient of a brand-new suit of tar and feathers, was escorted through the whole length of the town seated on a rather lean Pegasus and bidden a long adieu at the further end.

"The poetical flight which called forth this popular expression had for its inspiration the banishment of a woman who, though posing as the wife of a prominent man, had previously sustained the same relation to an old circus manager. . . . Her charms being already on the wane, the faithless lover soon wearied of [her and sent her packing in order to marry a younger woman]—an injustice which fired the poet's soul with indignation.

"The verses as a whole I do not recall, nor would their publication be admissible; the following couplets will be sufficient to establish their character. They were headed 'Mrs. W——s' Lament.'

The United States, as we understand,  
Took sick and did vomit the dregs of the land,  
Her murderers, bankrupts and rogues you may see,  
All congregated in San Felipe.

"Then followed a long string of names, including those of the most prominent men in the place, together with the causes which impelled them to emigrate. There was literally 'more truth than poetry' in the argument, the master of ceremonies in the demonstration on the author having been lighted thither by the moon's pale beams. As Dr. Rivers expressed it, 'people were nearer on an equal footing socially in San Felipe than [in] any other place he ever saw; if one said to another, "you ran away," he could retort, "so did you."' Some wag fitted a tune to the doggerel rhyme, and the dare-

devil spirit which tempted the disinterested to sing it was several times productive of bloodshed.”<sup>2</sup>

It will be prudent and respectable not to haul any skeletons out of the closets of “Austin’s Three Hundred”—the F.F.V.’s of Texas. The reader can only peep into the closet darkness through a slit in the door. There were, it must be remembered, several men by the name of Williams in Austin’s colony. Furthermore, the tale that Smithwick half tells<sup>3</sup> may be entirely false. It is certainly a very different tale from that told by Mr. James Hatch, of San Antonio.

I should never have taken up the subject of “Mrs. Williams’ Lamentation” had not Mr. Hatch furnished me with a more or less complete version of the song—and a very pleasant account of its origin. Now Mr. Hatch, it should be explained, is the grandson of Captain Sylvanus Hatch, who settled on the Stephen F. Austin grant on the Lavaca River in 1827. He himself is getting to be an old man, but his memory is remarkable for tenacity, and since boyhood he has been interested in preserving the traditions of early day Texans.

According to Mr. Hatch, “Mrs. Williams’ Lamentation” was first sung on the streets of San Felipe in 1826. It was occasioned, as he recalls a common story, in the following manner. Back in one of the states Williams was imprisoned for debt. Living in the community was a wealthy widow, who owned plantation and slaves. She paid the debts and restored Williams to freedom. He promptly courted and married her,

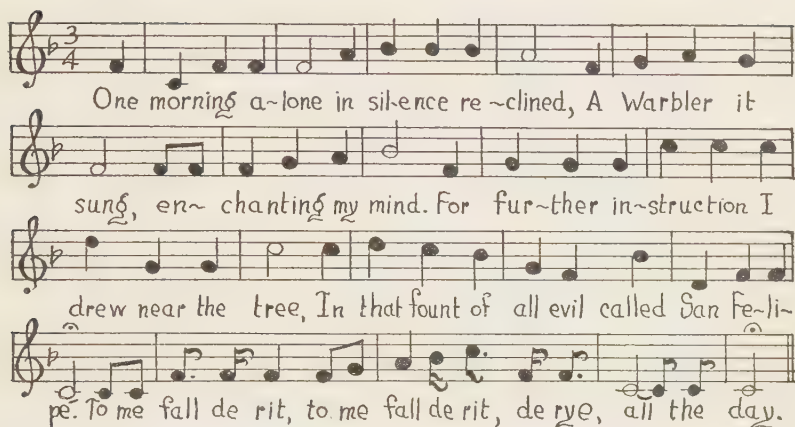
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<sup>2</sup>The San Felipeans were really very jealous of their virtue as contrasted with the character of other settlers in Texas, particularly with the character of the Nacogdoches men. During the Fredonian Rebellion, for instance, they passed resolutions as follows: “We would wish the Government to understand clearly and distinctly that those traitors at Nacogdoches at least the leading men are of Infamous characters who have been obliged to fly from the United States for Murders and other crimes committed there.”—Barker, Eugene C., *The Austin Papers*, Washington, D.C., 1924, p. 1569.

<sup>3</sup>In the unpublished “Notes Made by Mrs. Holley in Interviews with Prominent Texans in Early Days,” which are in the archives of the University of Texas, the other half of the tale is told. Mrs. Mary Austin Holley was a cousin of Stephen F. Austin, and she wrote the first history of Texas. Incidentally, in the “Notes” she tells a graphic story of another tar and feather party.

and they had a child. Not a great while afterwards Austin was in the country seeking colonists for Texas. Williams wanted to go, and Austin wanted him. But Mrs. Williams objected. Her husband and Austin decided to bring the child with them, depending on Mrs. Williams to follow—with slaves and money. She did follow, pulled by mother love, but brought with her no very flattering opinion of the people she was going among. On the passage down the Mississippi River she heard a sailor singing. He had an excellent voice. She conceived the idea of composing a song in which she should tell what she thought of the Texas colonists and of having the sailor sing the song into their ears. Spite, as well as revenge, is sweet. The sailor was hired to come along to Texas. In San Felipe he sang the song—and was tarred and feathered, then ridden out of town on a rail, a common manner of expressing mob disapprobation in those days. Husband and wife were reconciled. "The song was suppressed, or partly suppressed, at the time," says Mr. Hatch, but eventually every old Austin colonist had a copy of it and it was sung in Texas homes. I have not heard it now in fifty years, but my memory of it is clear."

The doggerel verses supplied by Mr. Hatch bear out his story of the song's origin. There must have been much gossip about the characters whose acts brought on the tarring and feathering and the song. The story about the origin of the song as well as the song itself belongs to folk-lore. It is exactly the kind of song that anybody might lampoon anybody's name into, and if all the verses that were made up could be gathered together, they would doubtless make, as Smithwick says, "a long string" and would doubtless hint a deal of personal history more diverting than veracious.



- 1 One morning alone, in silence reclined,  
 A Warbler it sung, enchanting my mind;  
 For further instruction I drew near the tree,  
 In that fount of all evil called San Felipe.
- 2 Says I, "Little Warbler, why do you sing?  
 Is it of glad tidings or any such thing?"  
 "Of San Felipe, as I'll quickly tell,  
 And a most horrible misfortune that me befell."

*Chorus:* 'Tis runaway rogue and bankrupt you see,  
 Come to settle themselves here in San Felipe.

- 3 "The first of those villains to come to this state  
 Was runaway Stephen F. Austin the great;  
 He applied to the Spaniards, as I understand,  
 From them had permission to settle the land.
- 4 "The next was my husband, for you will now see  
 How Austin he coaxed him to San Felipe,  
 To this great Sanhedrin, and not very mild,  
 That I should be banished, then robbed of my child.

*Chorus:*

- 5 "Next came those Yankees, appearing so grand,  
 Like the frogs of old Pharaoh, a curse to the land;  
 'Tis a rough calculation, but I am sure I am right,  
 Two-thirds of them left their own country by night.
- 6 "And in my conclusion I can only observe  
 That the greatest secret of all I must hold in reserve,  
 For should I confess it, Steve would be mad,  
 And if I forbear I can only be sad."

*Chorus:*



Mr. Hatch really furnished two versions of the song. In his second version each quatrain ends with a nonsense line that serves as a refrain:

To me fall de rit, to me fall de rit, de rye, all the day.

#### THE MAID OF MONTERREY

This song has given me no small amount of trouble. I seem to remember having seen it somewhere in print, though not with the music, probably in some book of autobiographic chronicle; extended search, however, has failed to locate it. *The Book of 1000 and One Songs, or Songs for the Million*, published in New York, 1846, was evidently in press when the Mexican War broke out, for at the very end of the volume there are nearly a dozen patriotic songs on General Taylor, the American soldiers in Mexico, the Texas Rangers, and other subjects relating to the war; but "The Maid of Monterrey" does not appear. Six years later appeared *Songs for the People; Comprising National, Patriotic, . . . and Naval Songs*, edited by Albert G. Emerick, Boston, 1852. It has three songs on the battle of Buena Vista, one on the battle of Palo Alto, another on the battle of Churubusco, and one on "Uncle Sam and Texas"; but there is no mention of the "Maid of Monterrey." Apparently this song never became national.

Yet there is no doubt of the song's former popularity in Texas. Francis D. Allan's *Lone Star Ballads*, a compilation of frontier and Confederate songs, printed in Galveston in 1874, notes that two of the songs included were "sung to the air of 'The Maid of Monterrey.'" In 1854 Smithwick<sup>4</sup> attended a Fourth of July celebration at Marble Falls at which Jabez Brown "sawed out reels" and called dances from before dark until daylight, "occasionally varying the program by singing . . . 'The Maid of Monterrey' and 'The Destruction of Sennacherib.'"

Three different informants have furnished variants of the song. Mrs. Hal B. Armstrong, of Austin, recently turned

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<sup>4</sup>Smithwick, Noah, *The Evolution of a State, or Recollections of Old Texas Days*, Austin, 1900, pp. 315-316.

over to the Texas Folk-Lore Society copies of a number of songs that her father, W. D. Hunter, a pioneer Texan, made in the fifties and seventies. One of the songs is "The Maid of Monterrey," and, as this version has one more stanza than either of the other versions furnished, it is the one here used. Mrs. Mattie Austin Hatcher, Archivist of the University of Texas, secured the words of three stanzas and the music from her mother, Mrs. C. F. Austin, of Austin, who has been singing the song since her childhood. She says that she never saw the song in print. Miss Katherine Cook, a teacher in the public schools of Austin, very kindly transcribed the tune as sung by Mrs. Austin. Finally, Mr. James Hatch, of San Antonio, who has already been mentioned in connection with "Mrs. Williams' Lamentation," furnished three stanzas of the song.

He says that the song was written by James T. Lytle, a veteran of the Mexican War, with whom the Hatch family was intimately acquainted. Lytle was a lawyer; he is buried at Port Lavaca; and he is remembered as the author of "The Ranger's Song," beginning,

"Mount! mount! and away o'er the green prairies wide,"

though even this spirited song has been ascribed to another person and has often been printed anonymously.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Hatch says that Lytle served as a Ranger with Mustang Gray and that he also wrote "Mustang Gray,"<sup>6</sup> which is one of the bravest and best of the popular ballads of Texas. Personally, I am ready to take Mr. Hatch's word that Lytle wrote

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<sup>5</sup>"The Ranger's Song" is accessible in Hilton R. Greer's *Voices of the Southwest*, New York, 1923. Allan, in *Lone Star Ballads*, page 24, assigns authorship of the song to "Mr. Kennedy, British consul at Galveston, 1836." D. W. C. Baker, *A Texas Scrap-Book*, New York, 1875, page 418, assigns the poem to Lytle and gives as source the *Houston Telegraph*, where it no doubt early appeared under Lytle's name. Probably the first book to print the song was Samuel C. Reid's *The Scouting Expeditions of McCulloch's Texas Rangers*, Philadelphia, 1847, page 37; Reid ascribes the song to Lytle, with whom he "rangered," and notes that it is sung to the air of "I'm Afloat."

<sup>6</sup>John A. Lomax, *Cowboy Songs*, gives "Mustang Gray," page 79. An interesting variant of the song is found in A. J. Sowell's *Rangers and Pioneers of Texas*, San Antonio, 1884, pages 231-232.

both "Mustang Gray" and "The Maid of Monterrey." It seems to me extremely likely that the same man composed both songs, so closely parallel are three stanzas of "Mustang Gray" with some of the lines in "The Maid of Monterrey." The three stanzas alluded to are:

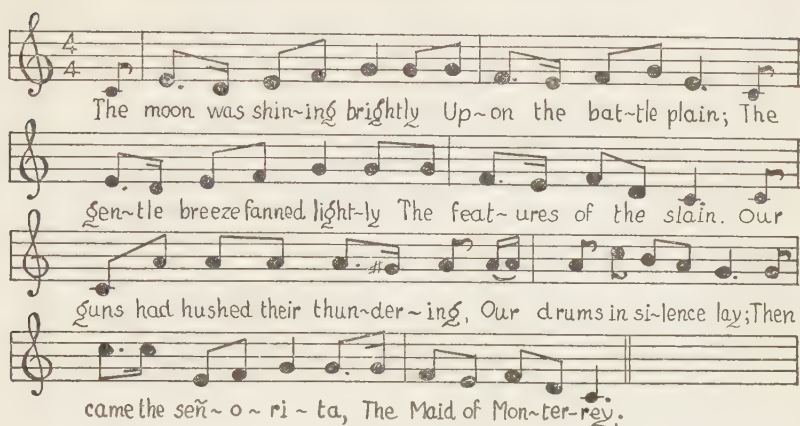
Once he was taken prisoner,  
Bound in chains upon the way;  
He wore the yoke of bondage  
Through the streets of Monterrey.

A *señorita* loved him,  
And followed by his side;  
She opened the gates and gave to him  
Her father's steed to ride.

God bless the *señorita*,  
The belle of Monterrey;  
She opened wide the prison door  
And let him ride away.

The battle of Monterrey was fought in September, 1846. A year later the American army of occupation at Puebla, Mexico, began publishing a weekly newspaper entitled *Flag of Freedom*. It printed a war poem nearly every week. In the issue of November 27 (Vol. I, No. 12) it printed Lytle's "The Ranger's Song" anonymously. One would certainly expect to find "The Maid of Monterrey" in the *Flag of Freedom*, but the file of this interesting paper, perhaps incomplete, in the archives of the University of Texas, fails to reveal it. However, the issue of December 11, 1847, contains a ballad that is identical in theme with that of "The Maid of Monterrey." The title of this ballad is "*El Niño*, or the Soldier Child." It tells the story of a boy soldier, thirteen years old, who while wounded at Churubusco was succored by a "lonely Indian maid."

She bore him to her Indian home,  
Upon her matted bed;  
She spoke,—O soothing was her tone—  
And pressed his weary head.  
She look'd, and cried in accents wild,  
*El niño qué?* the soldier child.



- 1 The moon was shining brightly  
 Upon the battle plain;  
 The gentle breeze fanned lightly  
 The features of the slain.  
 Our guns had hushed their thundering,  
 Our drums in silence lay;  
 Then came the *señorita*,  
 The Maid of Monterrey.
- 2 She cast a look of anguish  
 On dying and on dead;  
 Her lap she made a pillow  
 For those who groaned and bled;  
 And when our bugles sounded  
 Just at the break of day,  
 All blessed the *señorita*,  
 The Maid of Monterrey.
- 3 She gave the thirsty water,  
 She dressed the bleeding wound;  
 Her gentle prayer she uttered  
 For those who groaned around.  
 And when the dying soldier  
 One brief prayer did pray,  
 He blessed the *señorita*,  
 The Maid of Monterrey.
- 4 Although she loved her nation  
 And prayed that it might live,  
 Yet for the dying foeman  
 She had a tear to give.  
 Then cheers to that bright beauty  
 Who drove death's pangs away,  
 The meek-eyed *señorita*,  
 The Maid of Monterrey.

## II. COWBOY SONGS

Every fall when I go down to San Antonio to the meeting of the Old Trail Drivers of Texas I see Charlie Johnson—from Charco, Texas. His voice does not have the timbre that it used to have, but he still likes to sing and often he does sing. Several times I have heard him recite to the old trail men verses of his own composition; he generally comes prepared with a "ballid." At the reunion of the trail men in 1925, for instance, he recited some reminiscent verses entitled "The Old Cowboy."<sup>7</sup>

## THE OLD COWBOY

- 1 I rode a line on the open range,  
When cowpunching wasn't slow;  
I've turned the longhorned cow one way,  
And the other the buffalo.
- 2 I went up the trail in the eighties—  
Oh, the hardships I have stood!<sup>8</sup>  
I've drank water from cow tracks, boys,  
When you bet it tasted good.
- 3 I've stood night guard many a night  
In the face of a driving storm,  
And sang to them a doleful song,  
While they rattled their hocks and horns.
- 4 I've been in many a stampede, too;  
I've heard the rumbling noise;  
And the light we had to turn them by  
Was the lightning on their horns.
- 5 But many a boy I worked with then,  
Is sleeping on old Boot Hill;<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Printed in *Frontier Times*, Bandera, Texas, November, 1925, page 35.

<sup>8</sup>When the old-time cowpuncher talks about the hardships he has stood he is generally wishing that he had a chance to re-stand them. He is not really trying to put up a monument to his own sacrifices. He had a bully good time, and he remembers that time with gusto.

<sup>9</sup>Boot Hill was the graveyard at Dodge City, Kansas, "Cowboy Capitol," where more than a few men were buried with their boots on—the boots in which they had died.



For his last cow drive was made to Dodge,  
Over the Jones and Plummer trail.

6 They're building towns and railroads now,  
Where we used to bed our cows;  
And the man with the mule, the plow, and the hoe  
Is digging up our old bed grounds.

7 The old cowboy has watched the change,  
Has seen the good times come and go—  
But the old cowboy will soon be gone,  
Just like the buffalo.

Charlie Johnson is a genuine cowboy balladist. At the reunion of the trail drivers last year I got him off in a corner of a restaurant where Mexican waiters serve *enchilladas* with plenty of chili, and for three hours he crooned old trail songs to me and told me some of the story of his life. I suppose that a scientific folk-lorist would reject the story as an intrusion; but as most of these range ballads are interesting primarily as an expression of the people who sang them and as they are to be understood only by understanding the range people, I make no apologies for setting down here several facts concerning this old-time cowboy who made and sang ballads while following cows.

Charlie Johnson cannot remember when he could not ride. He was born and reared in South Texas. At sixteen—that was in 1877—with a dollar and a half in his pocket he left home to make his fortune. He did not run away, however, and his mother begged him not to go up the trail with cattle until he was older. He promised her that he would not go up the trail for a while yet, and he kept his promise. He went to work for Tom O'Connor, who owned more land and cattle than any other ranchman on the coast.

That year Snyder and Boyce were buying a big string of cattle from O'Connor to stock a new range in the Panhandle, and while they were receiving the cattle one of the cowmen remarked that their outfit had a horse none of the hands could ride.

"I'll bet five dollars we have got a hand that can ride him," spoke up one of the O'Connor men.

"Take you up."

While the horse was being roped out, Charlie Johnson offered to bet twenty-five dollars more that the O'Connor man could ride him. The money was covered. The strangers did not know that Charlie was to be the rider.

By now everybody "in camps" was interested. The horse was not only bad to pitch; he was "hell to mount." He had a habit of coming around so fast and hard that he would knock down the man getting on him. While the horse was being saddled, old Tom O'Connor announced that he would bet one hundred dollars that Charlie could ride him if he ever got a hold on the cheek strap of the horse's bridle. The strangers were beginning to get interested in this boy rider, and nobody took up the bet.

But it was not Charlie's plan to mount by the stirrup route. He did not try to catch hold of the cheek strap. He took the bridle reins in the usual way, stood back from the horse, then with a flying leap landed in the saddle. He knew that if he could ever get seated he could ride—and he did ride. He made twenty-five dollars in a few minutes.

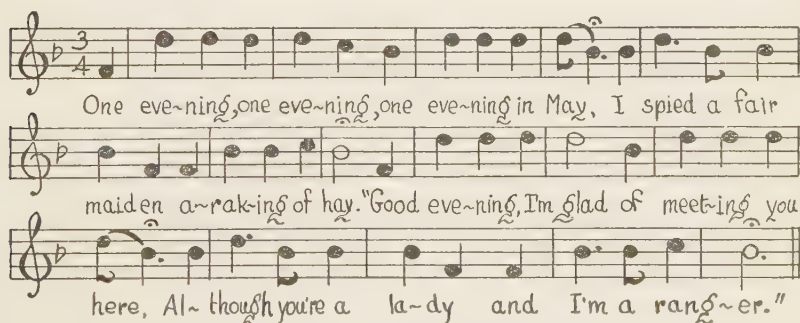
Tom O'Connor took a great fancy to him. One day he saw him branding calves. "That is the way I like to see them burned, Charlie," he said. "Burn them till the brand is the color of your breeches." In those days the cowboys wore red-colored ducking.

"I believe," says Johnson, "that during the next five years I branded more cattle than any other man in Texas ever branded in the same length of time. Annually I branded 10,000 calves for O'Connor and about 8,000 for men that ran stock on the same range."

In 1880 Johnson took his first trip up the trail, thereafter going every year for six years, with the exception of 1883, when he married and did not want to leave his wife. The trail called into action all his poetical and canorous powers. He sang by the dozen cowboy songs now known through collections; he sang camp meeting songs; he made up songs of his own to sing. Like "Whistling Rufus," he "*sang* at his work and *sang* at his play."

## THE COWBOY'S STROLL

One of the songs he "made up" he calls "The Cowboy's Stroll"; he says that it became a common song of the trail and was for years sung all the way from the coast to the Yellowstone. Now in the realm of folk song "made up" frequently means "made over." Like "The Dying Ranger," "Texas Rangers," and other songs popular with Texas cowboys, "The Cowboy's Stroll" was made over from a Confederate song. In Ailan's *Lone Star Ballads* (Galveston, 1874, pp. 80-81) it appears as "The Rebel Prisoner." Carl Sandburg (*The American Songbag*, New York, 1927, pp. 136-138) gives, with music, two versions of it: "One Morning in May" and "The Troubled Soldier." John H. Cox (*Folk-Songs of the South*, Cambridge, 1925, pp. 279-280) gives two versions of the song and traces it through various forms to an English origin. It was a Union war song as well as a Confederate war song. If "The Cowboy's Stroll" were not derived—if it had sprung up natively along the cow tracks like cockleburbs—it would certainly not babble of the "knapsack" and the "nightingale." Under title of "The Nightingale," a close variant of the song, replete with "nightingales" and "gliding waters," is printed in the *Missouri Historical Review*, April, 1928, Vol. XXII, No. 3, pp. 400-401, "text supplied by the Missouri Folk-Lore Society."



- 1 One evening, one evening, one evening in May  
 I spied a fair maiden a-raking of hay.  
 "Good evening, I'm glad of meeting you here,  
 Although you are a lady and I'm a ranger."
- 2 They walked and they talked until they came to the spring  
 And from his knapsack he drew a fine violin.  
 His bow, it being ready, his arm so strong,  
 He played her sweet music the whole evening long.

- 3 Now says the lady, "Just play one tune more."

He tuned up his fiddle to a much higher string,  
And he played her a tune called "The Valleys Do Ring."

- 4 Now says the lady, "Won't you marry me?"

"Oh," says the cowboy, "that never can be.  
I've a wife in old Texas and children three,  
One of the prettiest little babies you ever did see.

- 5 "I'll go back to old Texas and there stay one year.

I will drink of cold water instead of strong beer,  
And if ever I return it will be in the spring  
To see the water gliding and hear the nightingale sing.

- 6 "I will build me a castle in some Texas town,

So strong that no wind can blow it down,  
And if anyone asks if I live alone,  
Pray tell them I'm a cowboy far away from home."

Charlie Johnson says that he had a habit of adding new stanzas to familiar songs. He added to "Oh, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," but of all the additions he ever composed he likes best two stanzas he added to the comforting old hymn of "The Sweet By and By."

"I want to say here," prefaces Mr. Johnson, "that I learned more old church songs on the trail than I ever learned in church. One year—it was 1882—Tom O'Connor left me at Caldwell, Kansas, to sell out a bunch of mixed horses while he went on to Ogallala, Nebraska, to sell out several *remudas* of saddle horses. He got through before I did and came back to find me with sixty head still on hand. I told him that Angus McLean, who kept a store in Caldwell, was figuring on the remnant. Well, he went to Angus and they agreed on a price, provided O'Connor would leave a Texas cowboy with him a month to herd the horses and get them located.

"Tom asked me if I would stay. 'Sure,' I said, and the deal was closed. McLean had a father, a brother, and two sisters living out from Caldwell a few miles on the Kansas-Indian Territory line. I was to take the horses there, herd them on the range every day, and pen them at night. The McLeans were to board and lodge me. At first we were a little shy of each other, for at that time the Kansans thought the Texans wore horns and were straight out of hell, and the



Texans had no use for Kansas grangers. But I soon found them as good people as I ever knew, and when I warmed up and sang old-time religious songs for them they thought that I was not so tough as they had heard all Texas cowboys were.

"Miss Katie McLean played the organ, and every night she and I and Miss Eunice and Norman McLean, sometimes with Angus, would have music. A Texas outfit was holding cattle not far off, and nearly every day I would herd down their direction and while my horses grazed would visit in camp. We had lots of singing there too. Two of the cowboys got into the habit of coming up to the McLeans and singing with the family.

"One day the McLeans said they wanted me to go to Sunday School next Sunday. I asked them what kind of church they attended. They said Presbyterian. 'Well,' says I, 'I am a Catholic, but I never knew of any church hurting anybody.' Then it turned out that they wanted me and the two other cowboys to sing at the church. We all went, and were introduced. The minister was told how I had made up some verses to 'The Sweet By and By,' and of course he wanted them sung. Well, Miss Katie played the organ and those two cowboys and myself got up and sang 'The Sweet By and By.' The stanzas I had composed were as follows:

We shall meet on that beautiful shore.  
In the joys of the saved we shall share;  
All our pilgrimage toil will be o'er,  
And the conqueror's crown we shall wear.

We shall meet, we shall sing, we shall ring,  
In the land where the saved never die.  
We shall rest free from sorrow and pain,  
Safe at home in the sweet by and by.

"The church liked the verses so well that they were added to the song for that congregation, and for all I know may be sung there today.

"The only time I ever wanted to kill a man was in Kansas, and if we had not been in Kansas I guess I would have killed



him. He was a Mexican cook and he stole some money from me. I had positive proof, and when I accused him he made at me with a big butcher knife. I pulled my gun and was throwing it down on him when Tom O'Connor rushed in and pushed my arm up. He told that Mexican that if he did not drop his knife and pull out of camp *muy pronto* he would let me kill him. The Mexican pulled out. The Kansans wanted nothing better than to send a Texan to the penitentiary, and I guess it was a good thing that I did not get to shoot."

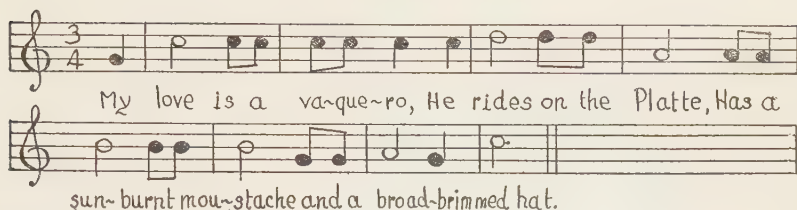
#### THE COWBOY'S HAT, OR THE BUCKING BRONCO

Another song that Charlie Johnson claims a hand in is "The Cowboy's Hat." It is interesting to me for the number of claimants to authorship of various versions of the song. I have already spoken of James Hatch, of San Antonio. He was a trail driver and from his youth up he has composed verse. "While I was at Platte City, Nebraska, in 1882 with a trail herd," he says, "I composed 'The Bucking Bronco.' I was with the Ed Nicholson outfit and was horse wrangler. With the same outfit was Billie Davis, a San Antonio cowboy and also a wrangler. Billie was not a poet and he was not much of a singer, but he was a great whistler. He made up the tune, by whistling, to go with 'The Bucking Bronco.'" A variant of the song, entitled "Bucking Bronco," is in Lomax's *Cowboy Songs*, pages 367-368. Five of the seven verses that Lomax records are in *Songs of the Cowboys* by N. Howard Thorp (Boston, 1921, pp. 14-15). Thorp ascribes authorship to Belle Starr, outlaw woman of the Indian Territory.<sup>10</sup> He adds this note: "Written about 1878. Song has been expurgated by me. The author was a member of a notorious gang of outlaws, but a very big-hearted woman. I knew her well." In "Gleanings from the By-ways of Oklahoma Folk-Lore," by Mable Caldwell, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, March, 1926, page 46, the song, exactly as given by Lomax, is again recorded. I shall give first Mr. Johnson's version and then Mr. Hatch's version.

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<sup>10</sup>For an entertaining account of Belle Starr see *Calamity Jane and the Lady Wildcats*, by Duncan Aikman, New York, 1927, pp. 158-206.

(A)



- 1 My love is a vaquero,  
He rides on the Platte,  
Has a sunburnt moustache  
And a broad-brimmed hat.
- 2 He will treat you so clever  
With honest respect,  
That you never will regret  
Meeting his broad-brimmed hat.
- 3 The last time I saw him  
It was early in spring;  
He was riding a bronco,  
A high-headed thing.
- 4 Now, all you gay ladies,  
Wherever you are at,  
Beware of the cowboy  
With a broad-brimmed hat.

(B)

The song as composed by Mr. Hatch gives a most excellent picture of the cowboy in town at the end of the trail. It may well have been sung before the song became emphatically a woman's warning. It is certainly superior to other versions, including the one that Thorp attributes to Belle Starr.

- 1 Beware, all fair maidens  
Who live on the Platte,  
Beware of the cowboy  
Who wears the white hat.
- 2 He will toss you a kiss,  
Then away he will go,  
Recrossing the plains  
On his bucking bronco.

- 3 He has a sweetheart in Texas,  
Depend upon that,  
Who worked the bright star<sup>11</sup>  
For the cowboy's big hat.
- 4 She awaits his coming  
All anxious to know  
Just how he has dared  
With his bucking bronco.
- 5 He holds off the marshal  
While having his fun.  
If crowded too closely  
He swaps ends with his gun.
- 6 Swinging into his saddle,  
Away he will go  
While hanging big spurs  
Into his bucking bronco.
- 7 The cowboy is generous,  
His courage oft tried;  
A path seeming dangerous  
He surely will ride.
- 8 But he squanders his money  
Wherever he may go,  
While he shoots up a town  
On his bucking bronco.
- 9 The bronco's his treasure  
In which he takes pride.  
That range has no limit  
O'er which he will ride.
- 10 Most honest and truthful,  
To friend or to foe,  
Bold knight of the plains  
On his bucking bronco.

In September, 1927, I spent two wonderful weeks with the Double Circle outfit in Arizona. The Double Circle range, comprising six hundred sections of land in one big pasture, probably comes nearer realizing old-time open range conditions than any other ranch in America. There is not a wagon

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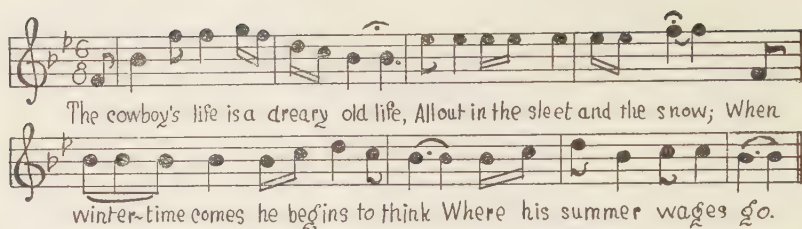
<sup>11</sup>An embroidered star often ornamented hat, boots, gauntlets, saddle, and other accoutrements of the "Lone Star" cowboys.

road on the ranch; the outfit rounds up cattle very much as outfits fifty years ago rounded them up; it takes a week to trail a herd of cattle from headquarters down to the shipping pens on the Gila River and during the drive the cattle are held under herd at night. Many of the ranch hands go for months at a time without seeing a newspaper or hearing the hum of an automobile. Every man has his pack mule and tepee tent; the cook has four pack mules for his pots and provisions. It is an exceedingly rough country; it is a country of horsemen and pack animals. One might expect to hear in such a place some of the old cowboy songs. I worked for a week on the range; then the main outfit left for the Gila River with a herd of two thousand steers. Two days later the boss, two regular hands, eight Apache Indians, and I left with another herd of fifteen hundred heifers. The day we "shaped up" the herds there were around fifty cowhands in camp. Altogether, I had ample opportunity of hearing whatever songs were sung. I heard a few that have not, I think, been recorded.

The man of the outfit most given to song was Brice Willis, son of Jack Willis, the range foreman. He cooked for the "crowd" that took the second herd down to the Gila, and appeared to be more interested in singing and talking than he was in cooking.

#### THE COWBOY'S LIFE

The evening before we left "Rustler's Prairie" with our herd, it began to rain hard and the cook's fire went out just as we galloped into camp. Pretty soon I heard Brice Willis singing this song, with ironic intent, to a young cowboy. The first stanza bears a close resemblance to the chorus of "The Kansas Line" (Lomax, page 22).



- 1 The cowboy's life is a dreary old life,  
All out in the sleet and the snow.  
When winter time comes he begins to think  
Where his summer wages go.<sup>12</sup>
- 2 When the shipping all is over  
And the work all is done,  
He hangs up his Frazier saddle<sup>13</sup>  
And starts looking for some fun.
- 3 He steps up to the boss  
And draws his pay in full.  
He says, "Be sure and come back, boy."  
Then he thinks he has a pull.
- 4 He went into the barroom;  
His little roll he did pull.  
He called for drinks for the house,  
And he got pretty full.
- 5 He told the boys that he had quit  
And that he'd work no more.  
And then they got him in a poker game  
And took him to the floor.
- 6 He got up and looked around.  
He said that he was just that kind:  
He'd lose his money in a poker game  
And he never did mind.
- 7 Now he's on his way back to the rancho,  
The one he's just quit.  
He hits the boss for another job,  
The one he'd made a hit.

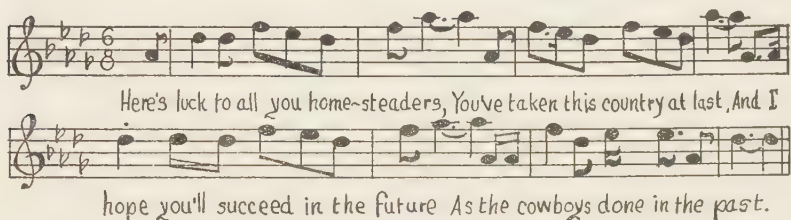
<sup>12</sup>"He'll be thinking where the summer wages go," or some such expression as that, is very common in the Arizona and New Mexico country. Asa Jones, a cowman of El Paso, with whom I went to the Double Circle ranch, uses the expression. He told me that he used to hear the song on the Texas plains thirty years ago.

<sup>13</sup>For a lifetime, saddles made by Frazier, of Pueblo, Colorado, have been famous all over the cow country of the United States. Sometimes "Frazier" is used as a synonym for "saddle."



## THE WYOMING NESTER

As Jack Willis (the boss) and I nursed the foot-sore drag cattle down the long, long slopes of the Gila Range, I heard him singing this song, and before we parted he taught it to me. The first stanza may be used as a chorus. Willis, a Texan, who has handled cattle over half a dozen states, says the song is widely known among cowboys, particularly of the Rocky Mountains region. The first stanza is sometimes used as a chorus.



- 1 "Here's luck to all you homesteaders.  
     You've taken this country at last,  
     And I hope you succeed in the future  
     As the cowboys done in the past.
- 2 "You've homesteaded all of this country,  
     Where the slicks and the mavericks did roam;  
     You've driven me far from my country,  
     Far from my birthplace and home.
- 3 "The cattle are still getting thinner,  
     And the ranches are shorter on men,  
     But I've got me a full quart of whisky  
     And nearly a full quart of gin.
- 4 "You have taken up all of the water  
     And all of the land that's near by—"  
     And he took a big drink from his bottle  
     Of good old '99 rye.
- 5 He rode far into the evening,  
     His limbs at last had grown tired.  
     He shifted himself in his saddle,  
     And he slowly hung down his head.
- 6 His saddle he used for a pillow;  
     His blanket he used for a bed.  
     As he lay himself down for a night's slumber  
     These words he to himself then said:

- 7 "I'm leaving this grand state forever,  
This land and the home of my birth.  
It fills my heart with sorrow,  
But it fills your heart with mirth."

When we got down to the shipping pens—which, with quarters for section hands, comprise the station of Calva,—on the Gila River, we found cowboy and cow trader company; we had a big supper of "spoon victuals" (bottled and canned goods) brought from a store some miles down the railroad track; everybody was feeling free and gay. The cattle were penned and would not be loaded until the next morning. With a little leisure, I expected to get several additional songs from Brice Willis, among them one celebrating the Double Circle outfit; but something that Brice got from a bootlegger who happened by so affected his disposition that I did not get the songs. However, two or three young punchers not over twenty years old repeated for me the verses of "Jim Oxford" and told me Jim's story. We burned the last drop of oil in the lantern while I wrote the verses down. The next morning the cattle and I left, and the Double Circle boys went back to gather more cattle, rope mavericks, and sing.

#### JIM OXFORD AND HIS SALT CREEK GIRL

This song seems to be descended from "Flat River Girl" (Sandburg's *American Songbag*, pp. 392–393; Franz Rickaby, *Ballads and Songs of the Shanty Boy*) or else from some cognate of that song. The geography in the song is somewhat confusing. Jim Oxford apparently started his cowboy career at Beeville. (Although I myself hail from the Beeville country, I never heard of him.) Then he went with a shipload of cattle to Cuba, where he no doubt "celebrated." Next he wandered out to Arizona and punched in the Salt Creek country, which is adjacent to the Double Circle range. Forsaken by his love, he drifted towards Muskogee in Oklahoma. Before he left Arizona he made a brilliant escape from officers that should be, but is not, celebrated in the song. According to the cowboys who told me the story, Jim Oxford was accused of stealing cattle and was on the lookout for officers; nevertheless, he went on working. One day he was on his horse

in the shipping pens helping to load cattle when he sighted some strange riders closing in on the pens. But one side was open to him for escape—the loading side. He galloped his horse up the loading chute, opened one of the wing gates swinging between the loading platform and the cattle car, spurred his horse off the high platform, and then “made for the tules,” scot free.

- 1 While I'm a bold cowboy  
From Salt Creek I come;  
While virtue departed,  
Alas, I profane.
- 2 In the cold ports of Cuba  
I'm very well known  
As a roving young cowboy,  
And Beeville's my home.
- 3 I'll tell you my troubles  
Without further delay,  
How a pretty young lassie  
My heart stole away.
- 4 She was a farmer's daughter  
On the Salt Creek side,  
And I always intended  
To make her my bride.
- 5 I worked for the Wood and Kennedents,  
I earned quite a stake.  
I stood fast and steady  
And neither played nor drank.
- 6 I was a boy that stood happy  
On the bright rolling streams,  
And the thoughts of sweet Emma  
They haunted my dreams.
- 7 I gave her my wages  
The same to keep safe;  
I begrudged her of nothing  
That I had on the earth.
- 8 One bright Sabbath morning  
A letter I received.  
She said from her promise  
She long had been relieved,

- 9 And had married another.  
She long had delayed,  
And the next time I saw her  
She'd ne'er be a maid.
- 10 It's down on old Salt Creek  
For me there's no rest;  
I'll saddle old Joe  
And pull farther west.
- 11 I'll go through Muskogee  
Good whisky to find,  
And leave my old sweetheart  
With another one behind.
- 12 Come all ye bold cowboys,  
To you I'll tell true,  
Don't depend on a woman,  
Because you're beat when you do.
- 13 But if ever you see one  
With a dark auburn curl,  
Remember Jim Oxford  
And the Salt Creek girl.

## SONG OF THE ELEVEN SLASH SLASH ELEVEN

C. B. Ruggles was born in the mountains of Oregon, and while he was yet in his teens he was managing his father's range and a herd of six or seven thousand head of cattle. Later he ran mustangs in Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico. For fifteen years he hunted bear, mountain lion, and other game in New Mexico and Colorado. He mined for a while; then he took up the search for the far-legended Lost Tayopa Mine of Mexico. After six years of riding he found it. In February, 1928, I took a trip with him down into Old Mexico to see the mine and get his story. We were gone a month, riding on mules two hundred and fifty miles across the wildest part of the Sierra Madre range. As we rode and camped, Ruggles told me the glamorous story of his life and of the Lost Tayopa Mine. His powers of entertainment never flagged during the trip, nor my powers of being entertained. Sometimes while riding along the trail he would sing, his favorite song being a translation of "*La Paloma*."

On the last day of our trip, just before we got into El Paso on the train, I took down the following song. It starts off in the manner of "The Old Chisholm Trail" and is sung to the tune of that song. The chorus may be sung after each couplet or at "any old place the singer feels like throwing it in." Ruggles says that he made up the last four or five stanzas, the concluding one of which brings in his own brand used in Oregon and later in New Mexico, the Eleven Slash Slash Eleven.<sup>14</sup>

- 1 It's round in your cavy,<sup>15</sup> and it's rope out your hack<sup>16</sup>  
And strap your old kack<sup>17</sup> well fast upon his back.

*Chorus:* Singing hi-yi-yuppy, yuppy, hi-yuppy-yea,  
Singing hi-yi-yuppy, yuppy, hi-yuppy-yea.

- 2 Your foot in your stirrup and your hand on the horn,  
You're the best damned cowboy that ever was born.
- 3 You land in the saddle and you give a loud yell,  
For the longhorn cattle have got to take the hill.
- 4 You round up a bunch of dogies and take down the trail,  
But the very first thing you land in jail.
- 5 But the sheriff's an old puncher and he fixes out your bail,  
For it's a damned poor country with a cowboy in jail.
- 6 So you round in your foreman and you hit him for your roll,  
For you're going to town and act a little bold.
- 7 You strap on your chaps, your spurs, and your gun,  
For you're going to go to town and have a little fun.
- 8 You ride a big bronc that will buck and prance  
And you pull out your gun and make the tenderfoot dance.

---

<sup>14</sup>The brand is made thus:



<sup>15</sup>Cavy, from *caballada*, a bunch of horses; here the saddle horses.

<sup>16</sup>Hack is here jocular for saddle horse, which may not be a "plug," or "hack," at all.

<sup>17</sup>Kack, saddle; from *kiak*, a box used to carry things in on a pack horse. See *kayak* in any dictionary.



- 9 You go into the gambling house a-looking kinder funny,  
For you got every pocket just chock full of money.
- 10 You play cards with the gambler who's got a marked pack,  
And you walk back to the ranch with the saddle on your back.
- 11 Now I've punched cattle from Texas to Maine—  
And known some cowboys by their right name.
- 12 No matter, though, whatever they claim,  
You'll find every dirty cuss exactly the same.
- 13 So dig in your spurs and peel your eyes to heaven,  
But never overlook a calf with Eleven Slash Slash Eleven.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>The implication of the last two couplets is that you'd better watch out for cow thieves, no matter who the rider is on your range.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL  
SESSION (1927) OF THE TEXAS FOLK-LORE  
SOCIETY

The Society met Friday evening, April 22, 1927, and continued its sessions through Saturday afternoon and evening. The meetings were held in the Y.M.C.A. auditorium at the University of Texas, Austin. The programs were as follows:

FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 22

8 o'Clock

*Tales of Riders Real and Legendary of the Old Southwest*, Mr. J. Frank Dobie, University of Texas. (This lecture was given as a University Public Lecture as well as under the auspices of the Texas Folk-Lore Society.)

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SATURDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 23

2:30 o'Clock

President's Address: *Which Way, Folk-Lorists?* Professor Gates Thomas, Southwest Texas State Teachers' College, San Marcos.

*Folk-Lore of the Llano Estacado*, Mr. J. Evetts Haley, Field Secretary of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, Canyon, Texas.

*The Legend of Adobe Walls*, Mrs. Olive K. Dixon, Miami, Texas.

*How the Huisache Came to Bloom*, Miss Adina De Zavala, San Antonio.

*Tall Tales for Western Tenderfeet*, Mr. A. W. ("Grip") Penn, Austin.

*Nicknames in Texas Oil Fields*, Mr. Hartman Dignowity, University of Texas.

*How Luce's Bayou Got Its Name*, Mr. G. T. Bludworth, State Department of Education, Austin.

*Confidences from Old Nacogdoches*, Miss Martha Emmons, Nacogdoches.

*Parental Folk Tales Among Texas Pioneers*, Mrs. Mary Jourdan Atkinson, Houston.

*The Devil's Grotto*, Mr. Mody C. Boatright, University of Texas, Austin, and Sul Ross State Teachers' College, Alpine.

Read by title: *Folk Place Names in the Old Cheyenne and Arapahoe Country of Oklahoma*, Mrs. Della I. Young, Cheyenne, Okla.; *The Songs They Sing*, Mr. John R. Craddock, Austin, Texas; *The Mysterious Power in Fossil Creek: A Legend of Tarrant County*, Mrs. Mary Daggett Lake, Fort Worth; *Myths of the Tejas Indians*, Mrs. Mattie Austin Hatcher, University of Texas.

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 23

8 o'Clock

*Lore of the Texas Vaquero*, Miss Jovita González, St. Mary's Hall, San Antonio.

*Cuando yo salí á Kansas* (When I Went up the Kansas Trail), *Pancho Villa*, *Valentin Mancero*, and other ballads of the Texas *vaqueros* sung by Mexicans with music; the ballad of Heraclio Bernal, sung by young ladies of the University of Texas.

---

At 6 o'clock P.M., Saturday, members and friends of the society met at dinner at the University Cafeteria.

Officers for the year 1927-1928 were elected as follows:

PRESIDENT, Col. M. L. Crimmins, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio.

VICE-PRESIDENTS, Mody C. Boatright, University of Texas; Newton Gaines, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth; Martha Emmons, Nacogdoches.

COUNCILLORS, Gates Thomas, Southwest Texas State Teachers' College, San Marcos; J. Evetts Haley, West Texas State Teachers' College, Canyon; L. W. Payne, Jr., University of Texas, Austin.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY AND TREASURER, Fannie Ratchford, University of Texas, Austin.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, J. Frank Dobie, University of Texas, Austin.

## CONTRIBUTORS

*Mary Jourdan Atkinson*, of Houston, contributed "Familiar Sayings of Old Time Texans" to the *Publications* of 1926.

*Mary Virginia Bales*, who lives in Fort Worth, took her Master's degree in English from Texas Christian University in 1927, writing a thesis on Negro folk-songs in Texas. "What Is Dis?"—a Negro song in her collection here printed—is one of the outstanding "finds" in Negro folk-lore of America.

*G. T. Bludworth* is with the State Department of Education, Austin. He does work among the rural schools.

*B. A. Botkin* is one of the most interesting men in Oklahoma. He has been connected with the Department of English in Oklahoma University since 1921 and is preparing a book on the Play Party. A leader in the literary movement of his adopted state, he is president of the Oklahoma Writers and of the Oklahoma Folk-Lore Society. He is poetry editor of *My Oklahoma*, poetry reviewer of the *Sunday Oklahoman*, and has contributed verse to the *American Mercury*, the *Southwest Review*, and other magazines. This fall he will launch a magazine of his own that will publish folk-lore and all kinds of material reflective of Oklahoman and Southwestern background.

*John Lee Brooks*, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, is this summer (1928) teaching a course in literary uses of folk-lore. It is the first course of its kind to be offered in the State of Texas, and may be taken as indicative of the mounting interest among Texans in the subject of folk-lore.

*John R. Craddock* contributed his first article to the *Publications* of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, "The Cowboy Dance," in 1923. He has contributed to every number published since that date. His legend of "Stampede Mesa" will appear in *The Southwest in Literature*, an anthology edited by Mabel Major and Rebecca W. Smith, to be issued soon by the Macmillan Company.

*J. M. Deaver* is county judge of El Paso County. He knows old-time Texas "from who laid the chunk." He writes that he has recently lost a very much valued "conjure bag."

*Bertha McKee Dobie* contributed "Tales and Rhymes of a Texas Household" to the Society's publication of 1927, *Texas and Southwestern Lore*. She teaches English in the University of Texas.

*Martha Emmons* is a constant collector of Texas folk-lore. She has taught history in the high schools of Taylor and Nacogdoches and has been very successful in interesting her pupils in local history and folk-lore.

*Newton Gaines*, professor of physics in Texas Christian University, is a real troubadour. To appreciate fully his interpretation of cowboy songs one must hear him sing them. He is president of the Texas Folk-Lore Society for 1928-1929.

*Acel Garland* is working now in the oil fields near Burkburnett. I knew him when he was a student in Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, three years ago. He writes: "I am a student and a roughneck and a hobo, and that is all there is to me." I know several other things that might be said to his credit.

*Robert Adger Law*, professor of English in the University of Texas, has for fifteen years been an active member of the Texas Folk-Lore Society. In 1912-1913 he was president; last year he contributed "A Note on Four Negro Words."

*Kate Stoner O'Connor* is a life member and patron of the Society. An indication of her interest in the background of Texas is her use of cattle brands in the architecture of her beautiful home at Victoria.

*H. B. Parks*, who is chief of the Division of Apiculture with the State Apicultural Research Laboratory at San Antonio, has a remarkable collection of Alaskan Indian folk-lore that has not been printed. He has done a great deal of useful work for the Witte Museum at San Antonio. The editor of this publication regards his "Follow the Drinking Gourd" as the most original contribution ever printed by the Society.

*A. W. Penn*, better known as "Grip," is a young business man of Austin.

*Nicolas Joseph Hutchinson Smith*, Cambridge, Mass., formerly taught English in the College of William and Mary, Virginia. Since 1925 he has "been devoting himself to the art of writing."

*John K. Strecker* is one of the most productive collectors of Texas folk-lore. His contributions have appeared in the last three *Publications* of the Society. He is an authority on birds, snakes, and other fauna of the Southwest and has contributed to many learned journals. He is librarian of Baylor University.

*Palmer Throop*, Instructor of French in the University of Texas, promises to continue work in Texas folk-lore.

*Philip C. Tucker*, Davenport, Florida, is a Texan and dates his interest in Texas traditions and history back for more than half a century.



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